

FREE GUIDE  
TO  
SEPTEMBER &  
OCTOBER  
1992

THE  
**TRIANGLE**  
CINEMA

LUIS BUÑUEL'S

# *Belle de Jour*

PLUS SEASON

LÉOS CARAX: LES AMANATS DU PONT-NEUF • BOY MEETS GIRL • THE NIGHT IS YOUNG  
SANDRA BERNHARD IN WITHOUT YOU I'M NOTHING  
SECRET FRIENDS • IMMACULATE CONCEPTION • STRAIGHT OUT OF BROOKLYN  
8th BIRMINGHAM FILM FESTIVAL



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**BY CAR.** From the city centre take Jennens Row off Masshouse Circus Roundabout, then the fourth exit on the left (Woodcock Street) and finally second on the left—Holt Street.



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## Main Films

### Night on Earth (15) September 1-3

Director: Jim Jarmusch. U.S.A., 1991.

Starring: Winona Ryder, Gena Rowlands, Béatrice Dalle.  
Colour. 120 mins.

Jim Jarmusch's latest is a transglobal taxicab comedy which strings together five different vignettes in five different cities, each observing in wry detail the singular relationship between passenger and driver as they speed towards their destination. Enterprisingly cast throughout, the quintet's opening L.A. story features Winona Ryder as a feisty cabbie deeply unimpressed by high-powered Hollywood agent Gena Rowlands, while Armin Mueller-Stahl tackles a lighter role as an amiable East German immigrant cabbie being given a lesson in Brooklyn street wisdom by Spike Lee veteran Giancarlo Esposito in the New York segment. The Paris section boasts the return of Béatrice (*Betty Blue*) Dalle as a blind girl who opens the eyes of prejudiced driver Isaach de Bankolé; Rome finds itself represented by Roberto Benigni and the sort of scabrous cabbies' tales which give his priestly fare (Paolo Bonacelli) a heart attack; and we end in Helsin-

ki—where else?—with a drunken cabful of Aki Kaurismäki regulars making hilarious efforts to top each other's tragedy-strewn chronicles of Scandinavian gloom.

As director Jarmusch's formal approach grows ever more conventional, his powers of human insight seem to have appreciably widened in scope. The oddball wit of his earlier work (*Stranger Than Paradise*, *Down by Law*) is still there in the New York instalment, yet the pointed comment on cultural blinkeredness in the Parisian piece and the extraordinary way in which the Finnish saga takes a leaf out of the wacky Kaurismäki book make this Jarmusch's most wise and rounded film to date. And apart from a slight tendency to drag during the over-extended Italian outing, the performances throughout are typically cherishable from this most undervalued director of actors.

Trevor Johnston

### Big Wednesday (PG) September 1-6

Director: John Milius. U.S.A., 1978.

Starring: Jan-Michael Vincent, William Katt, Gary Busey.  
Colour. Panavision. 119 mins.

*Big John Milius's classic surfing movie has been re-released in a new 35mm print.*

*Big Wednesday* is the point where John Milius's hymns of praise to male camaraderie, to the job that's gotta be done, and all the accoutrements



(guns, surfboards, etc.) of his militaristic code of honour, passed from an engaging, action-adventure absurdity (*The Wind and the Lion*) to a perplexed, naval-gazing absurdity. Which is to say that *Big Wednesday* may be his most personal film, the most clipped and introverted about its meanings, and therefore, potentially, his most embarrassing—either you respond to the existential thrill of riding a long piece of wood through a crashing wall of water, or you don't. That exquisite, personal absurdity, that potential for embarrassment, though, have made *Big Wednesday* Milius's biggest cult movie, even with critics who presumably would never dip their toes into water like this.

It's a tale of three friends, over a twelve-year period from the early 60s to 1974, divided into chapters named after the different 'swells' known to California surfers. One friend is a complicated, rebellious type who becomes a drunk (Jan-Michael Vincent); one is a straightforward, straight-up athletic and patriotic type (William Katt) who becomes a Vietnam hero; and the other is their anchor, the uncomplicated bonehead (Gary Busey). They have an older mentor who now sells surfboards and for some reason isn't played by Ben Johnson (who lent gravitas to Milius's *Dillinger* and *Red Dawn*). It's a world of sea, sky and sand—the social events of those twelve years are largely ignored, apart from the chance to mourn, John Ford-like, at the grave of a Vietnam buddy, and a perfunctory sneer at hippies. *Big Wednesday* is an original, painfully awkward, but probably the only film about surfing you need ever see.

Richard Combs

## *The Butcher's Wife* (12) September 4-6

Director: Terry Hughes. U.S.A., 1991.  
Starring: Demi Moore, Jeff Daniels, Frances McDormand.  
Colour. Dolby stereo. 104 mins.

Lovelorn psychic Marina (Demi Moore) wafts about her North Carolina look-out tower, putting all her considerable mental energies into finding Mr. Right. Then come tell-tale signs which indicate a lover is on his way and, before you can say crystal ball, the tide washes up portly New York butcher Leo (George Dzundza). Is this fate, or did Leo simply make a wrong turn at the last island? Within days they're married and setting up home in Greenwich Village, where Marina starts dishing out clairvoyant advice with the pork chops, a development which pleases everyone but Leo and local psychiatrist Dr. Alex Tremor (Jeff Daniels). Moore sports blonde hair and—less convincingly—a Southern accent, but these are the only elements which jar in this

### THE BUTCHER'S WIFE



hugely engaging romantic comedy. Terry Hughes's direction and crisp visuals turn studio artifice into something altogether magical. Suspend disbelief and enjoy.

Colette Maude/Time Out

## *Without You I'm Nothing* (18) September 4-10

Director: John Boskovich. U.S.A., 1990.  
Starring: Sandra Bernhard, John Doe, Steve Antin.  
Colour. Dolby stereo. 90 mins.

Produced by Nicolas Roeg, *Without You I'm Nothing* is outrageous comedienne Sandra Bernhard's filmed comedy/cabaret adapted from her successful off-Broadway stage show. Best known to the film world as the manically obsessive fan who was even madder than Robert De Niro in Martin Scorsese's *The King of Comedy* (she also appeared in Roeg's *Track 29*), Bernhard has since carved a niche for herself as a brash comic performer, as outspoken off-stage as on.

"Bernhard's pastiche of the Hollywood Dream is an hilarious hit parade of tormented lesbian lullabies, awesomely bad '70s go-go girl costumes and 'in your face' sexual politics. The cabaret is set in a fictitious L.A. supper club where the audience is predominantly black and unresponsive.

"Bernhard, the original wide-mouthed frog, shimmies her way through a star-spangled show: an anorexic, Madonna-style strippergram one minute and a bad-assed impression of a 'sexpert' in the mould of Dr. Ruth the next. She turns the old Billy Paul soul classic "Me and Mrs. Jones" into a sexually ambiguous anthem and she kidnaps Prince's "Little Red Corvette", transforming it into a bump and grind strip show. The

only trace of narrative comes in the shape of a mysterious black woman, Roxanne, who plays Bernhard's alter ego and makes a few fleeting appearances. Bernhard sends up her own life, from growing up in Flint, Michigan, to revealing a hidden yearning to be a Gentile on Christmas day.

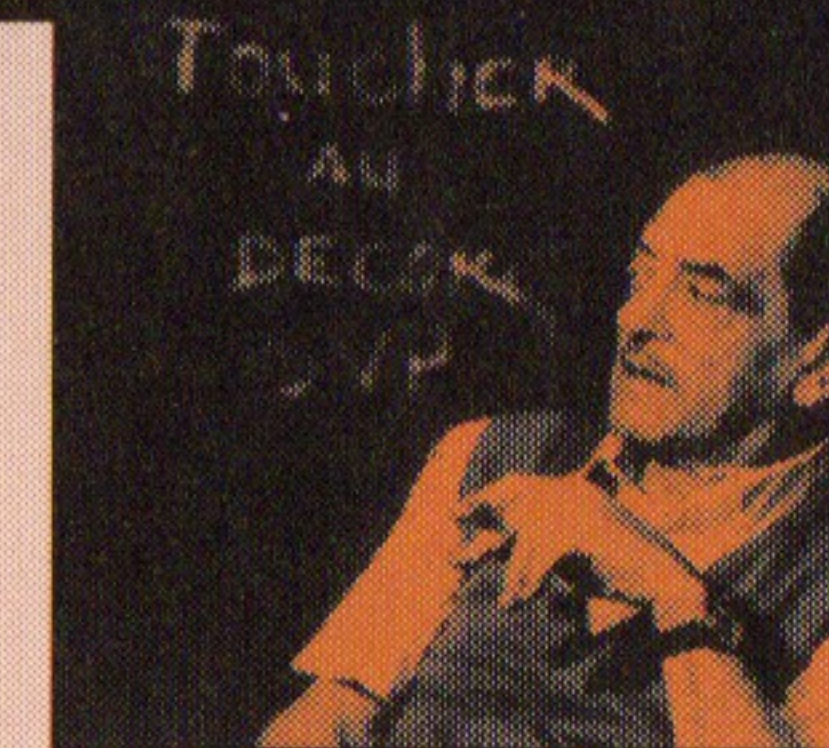
*Without You I'm Nothing* is sure to catapult her into the mainstream as a performer. Whether the mainstream is ready for her is another question."

Anita Chaudhuri/Time Out



WITHOUT YOU I'M NOTHING

### SEASON LUIS BUÑUEL

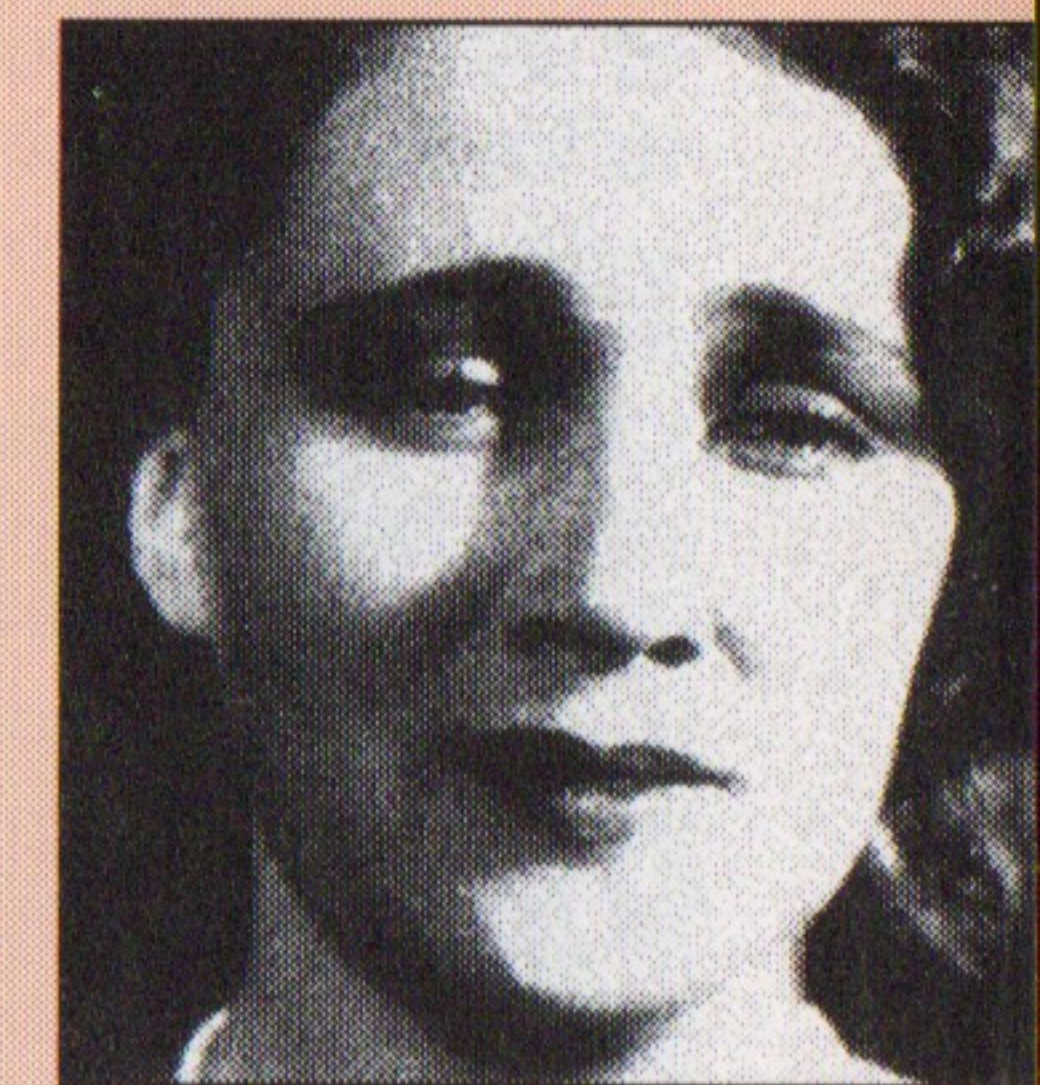


THE LATE, great Spanish director's varied and lengthy career spanned nearly fifty years and included films produced in France, Spain and Mexico. It all started with two notorious works made in collaboration with Salvador Dali, *Un Chien Andalou* (1929) and *L'Age d'Or* (1930), which outraged the Establishment but were enthusiastically embraced by the Surrealists. The Spanish Civil War led Buñuel to the United States (where he worked on pro-Loyalist American films) and then to Mexico, where he completed a number of commercial projects before re-establishing his European reputation in the 50s with such masterpieces as *Los Olvidados* and *Nazarin*. Despite his repeated attacks on the Church, the Establishment and middle-class morality, Buñuel was invited to make *Viridiana* (1961) in Spain, and the film even had a brief initial release there before Franco's regime realized its meaning. The final phase of his career was dominated by French productions, in which the old surrealist's attacks on human folly were expressed in somewhat lighter tones and a more sophisticated approach to visuals style and narrative. This season concentrates on the late French films, which have been re-released here in new 35mm prints. We've added *L'Age d'Or* and *Un Chien Andalou* to the collection.

### L'AGE D'OR

## *L'Age d'Or* (The Golden Age) September 7-9

Director: Luis Buñuel. France, 1930.  
Starring: Gaston Modot, Lya Lys, Max Ernst.  
Black and white. Subtitled. 60 mins.



In his second film, Buñuel shrugs off the taint of intellectual chic that sometimes mars *Un Chien Andalou* and was mostly contributed by Salvador Dali. Dali worked with Buñuel on the original scenario for *L'Age d'Or* but was not present during filming, and subsequently repudiated the finished product because it had been completely rewritten. Belonging to Buñuel





alone, *L'Age d'Or* speaks with his authentic voice from the very opening sequence: a pair of scorpions, complete with learned explanatory captions, followed (as a scorpion kills a rat) by a laconic title, "Some Hours Afterwards . . .", introducing a scene on a rocky shore where a bandit look-out sees four archbishops performing mysterious rites.

What still shocks and delights here is the abrasive humour with which Buñuel ruffles audience expectations (the apparently nonsensical non-sequitur of "Some Hours Afterwards"), encapsulates whole edifices of human belief in a single image (the collapse of ecclesiastical imperialism's golden age intimated in a shot of a house being blown up), and contrives to employ concrete symbols that stretch the imagination into making connections and associations. The documentary footage at the beginning, for instance, is apparently irrelevant to anything that follows: yet the scorpion and the dying rat remain inescapably in mind as analogies when man, having reduced the archbishops to a heap of mouldering bones, sets out to fulfil his hitherto forbidden desires.

In a sort of coitus interruptus that prefigures the structure of frustration on which *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* is built, Buñuel's hero then finds that he has escaped from spiritual domination only to fall victim to a secular authority bent on forestalling the fulfilment of any desires whatsoever. Here Buñuel's imagery of frustrated eroticism—man and woman rolling in frantic embrace in a puddle of mud from which they are dragged by outraged dignitaries, the woman forlornly sucking the phallic toe of a statue in a garden—is so persuasively powerful that the film has generally been hailed as a call to sexual arms.

Yet there are other images, in particular a shot of the hero gazing in ecstasy as the woman sits

on the lavatory (the sound of a flushing cistern is followed by a shot of lava bubbling suggestively around the foot of a volcano), that makes one wonder exactly who is the scorpion and who the rat. Given Buñuel's long-standing distrust of the way man is ever-ready to wallow morbidly in self-pity, self-deception and self-glorification, it is surely no accident that the Marquis de Sade's Duc de Blangis, emerging from the sexual liberation of his one hundred and one days in Sodom at the end of *L'Age d'Or*, should bear such a striking resemblance to conventional portrayals of Jesus Christ.

Buñuel's comments on the film in his autobiography are illuminating: "Around the principal characters, a man and woman, is disclosed the existing conflict in all human society between the sentiment of love, and any other sentiment of a religious, patriotic, humanitarian order; here, too, the setting and characters are realistic, *but the hero is animated by egoism, which imagines all attitudes to be amorous, to the exclusion of control or of other sentiments*" (my italics).

*L'Age d'Or*, in other words, is a film in which there is more than meets the eye, and through which revolutionary cultists are advised to proceed with caution. Not for nothing did Buñuel at one point plan to borrow a phrase from Karl Marx as its title: "In the Icy Waters of Egoist Calculation".

Tom Milne

Plus:

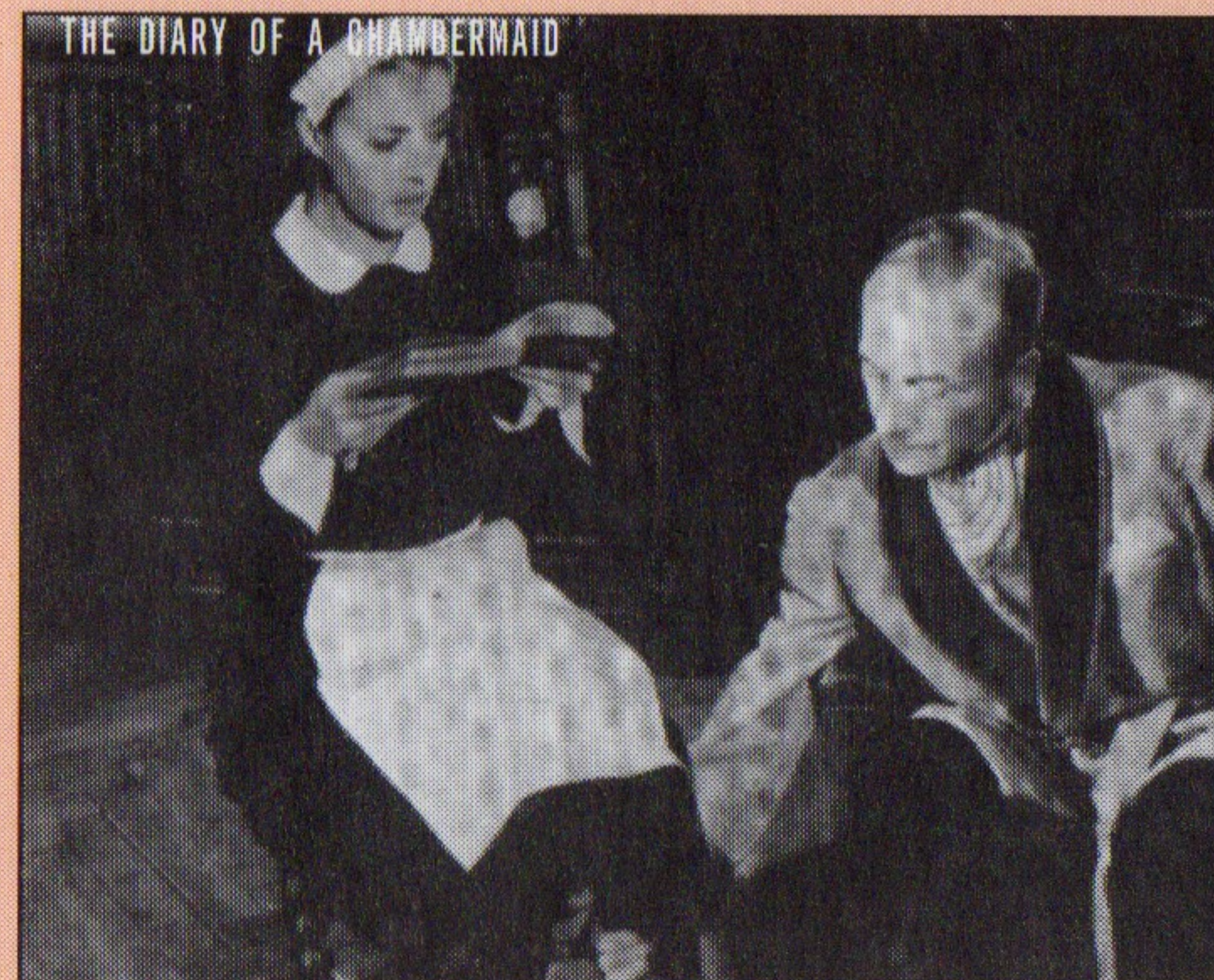
## Un Chien Andalou (An Andalusian Dog) (18)

Director: Luis Buñuel. France, 1929.  
Starring: Pierre Batcheff, Simone Mareuil,  
Jaime Miravilles.  
Black and white. Subtitled. 17 mins.

"Seventeen minutes of pure, scandalous dream imagery, a stream of images from which any which could be given a rational meaning was rigorously excluded . . .

"It begins with the fairytale invocation: 'Once upon a time . . . ' A burly man (Buñuel) stands near a window, sharpening his razor with diagonal strokes. He looks through the window at the sky and sees a thin cloud moving towards the full moon. A young woman sits, passively, with wide-open eyes. The blade of the razor approaches her eye. The cloud slices into the moon; the blade slices the girl's eye, and its gelatinous contents roll out. *N* viewings of the movie will fail to blunt that razor."

Raymond Durnat/Luis Buñuel



## The Diary of a Chambermaid (Le Journal d'une femme de chambre) September 28-30

Director: Luis Buñuel. France/Italy, 1963.  
Starring: Jeanne Moreau, Michel Piccoli, Georges Géret,  
François Lugagne.  
Black and white. CinemaScope. Subtitled. 98 mins.

Jeanne Moreau plays Célestine, the chambermaid of the title, whose role in the bourgeois household to which she is appointed becomes that of both observer and catalyst for the dormant tensions within. When Jean Renoir filmed Octave Mirbeau's novel in Hollywood in 1945, he set the action on the centenary of the French Revolution and thus gave the revolt of the servant classes against their masters an intimation of joy and affirmation shining through the cruelty and despair. Part of the darker colouring of Buñuel's adaptation stems from his setting of the tale in the late 1920s, where its brutality, casual violence and frank injustices seem to be harbingers of the violence to come.

In what was arguably the most pessimistic film Buñuel had made since *Los Olvidados* (1950), the upper classes are seen as devitalised and degenerate, the master using his position to seduce the maids under his charge (the horror of this is conveyed in a single close-up of the new maid's tearful face), the mistress's deep dissatisfaction represented by a fetish for cleanliness which, in her case, is clearly next to neurosis.

Unlike Renoir, however, Buñuel is equally critical of the servant classes, and the most substantial and complex relationship in the film is that between Célestine and the gamekeeper, Joseph. Célestine knows how to get on upstairs, how to manipulate her masters and calculate where the power lies, but the real concern in the

second part of the film is her attempt to incriminate the gamekeeper, whom she suspects has raped and killed a little girl.

The imagery might seem more subdued than is usual in Buñuel, but its cumulative effect is disturbing. The moment when a bee and a butterfly are blown off a flower by the blast of a shotgun is a profoundly suggestive image of the world of the film (the natural destroyed by the mechanical, the beautiful by the brutish). The rape scene gains its horror through suggestion rather than visual explicitness (a shot of a snail, a sustained tracking shot on Joseph as the idea gathers in his mind, a rustling of leaves, a shot of a boar). Maybe Buñuel's famed personal gentleness, like Coleridge's, explains his obsession with evil, his sense of its power, and his appreciation of truly unscrupulous characters. Célestine is a calculator and a schemer but she also has a rough sense of justice (Jeanne Moreau in the role is at her most magnificent). Joseph (splendidly played by Georges Géret) has some sense of propriety and puritanism, but there is also a barely contained savagery and it is clear that the age is going his way. "Vive Chiappe! Vive Chiappe!" he chants at the mysterious ending of the film. Chiappe was one of the key men responsible for the banning of Buñuel's *L'age d'Or*, and Buñuel's ending is an act of revenge but also a regretful historical hindsight. The golden age, the age of freedom, was over: Fascism was on the march.

Neil Sinyard

## Belle de Jour (18) September 11-16

Director: Luis Buñuel. France, 1966.  
Starring: Catherine Deneuve, Jean Sorel, Pierre Clémenti.  
Colour. Subtitled. 100 mins.

At the time rumoured to be Buñuel's farewell to the cinema, *Belle de Jour* in fact turned out to be merely the first in a string of masterpieces cele-

BELLE DE JOUR





brating his return to European film-making from exile in Mexico. Replacing the jagged asperities of Buñuel's earlier work came a new serenity, an effortless grace in which the characteristic scurrility about sex, religion and the bourgeoisie smoulders undimmed beneath the golden glow of an exquisitely polished surface.

The source for *Belle de Jour* is a psychological novel by Joseph Kessel, first published in 1928, in which a young woman becomes aware of her body for the first time as the result of an illness. Hitherto happily married in a well-bred sort of way, she now discovers within herself irresistible urges which drive her to spend her afternoons (hence her designation as a 'day-time beauty') in a brothel, pursuing a part-time career that is imperiled when she becomes passionately involved with a brutish young thug. When she refuses to abandon her husband, the thug shoots him; and after learning the truth, now permanently paralysed, the husband maintains an equally permanent silence towards his erring wife.

Unlike Kessel, to whom he otherwise remains essentially faithful, Buñuel offers no explanation of the woman's sudden discovery of her physical needs. Instead, jettisoning all rationalisation, he opens the film on a teasing note of ambiguity. To the sound of coach bells, husband and wife are seen driving down a country lane in an open landau, she talking of her love for him. Suddenly, he leaps from the carriage, orders the coachman to tie his wife to a tree, then has her whipped and violated. But in the next shot they are together in their home, calm and conventional, as she opens the conversation: "We were driving in a landau . . ."

There is little doubt here as to which scene is real and which imagined. But as the woman (Catherine Deneuve at her most enigmatic) proceeds on her odyssey of discovery through humiliation and gratification, Buñuel's quirkish sense of humour embroiders details—the chirping box containing some unnameable aid to sadism, the coffin employed to satisfy the erotic fancies of a duke mourning his daughter—that inhabit a weird twilight world in which fact and fantasy gradually shade into each other, each taking on the other's protective colouring.

A scabrous surrealist fairytale which shines with a strange inner purity, *Belle de Jour* defies logical analysis but it does have meaning. In the final scene (a complete departure from Kessel), the paralysed husband suddenly rises and goes to his wife after learning the truth; the sound of coach bells is heard again; and we see the same landau, now empty, driving down the same country lane. Suggesting an exorcism of the wife's forbidden desires (or of the husband's

incapacities), this scene also intimates that she has at last found a balance between the two kinds of love—physical and spiritual, hallowed and illicit, factual and fantastical—she has hitherto been desperately juggling.

Tom Milne

## The Milky Way (La Voie lactée) (PG) September 14-15

Director: Luis Buñuel. France, 1969.  
Starring: Paul Frankeur, Laurent Terzieff, Alain Cuny.  
Colour. Subtitled. 98 mins.

Made in 1968, after the huge success of *Belle de Jour*, Buñuel's heretical comedy *The Milky Way* is a mischievous satire on Catholicism and moves fluidly between reality and fantasy, past and present, images which delight and those which disturb. Two tramps, whose pilgrimage to the shrine of Santiago di Compostella forms the backbone of the narrative, first meet a cloaked stranger who prophesies they will have children by a prostitute. Thereafter their journey is punctuated by a series of mysterious and outrageous encounters with zealots of the past, who together represent the prickly progress of theological argument through the ages. "Everything in this film which concerns Catholicism and the heresies to which it has given rise", claims the film's end title, "particularly from the dogmatic point of view, is rigorously exact".

The film is perhaps too quirkily personal to have the resonance of the very best Buñuel. In comparison with the taut irony of *Nazarin* and the controversially joyous blasphemy of *Viridiana*, its critique seems somewhat specialised. God's designs might be 'impenetrable', according to this film, but so are some of Buñuel's theological jokes.

THE MILKY WAY



TRISTANA



Nevertheless, much of the film is very funny. In an inn, a priest argues about the doctrine of transubstantiation with an army officer and becomes so heated that he has to be carried out in a straightjacket. "You must have contradicted him", explains a policeman to the bewildered officer. A Jansenist argues with a Jesuit in a ferocious fencing duel, a literal rendering of the cut and thrust of religious debate and a hilarious homage to those screen swashbucklers who never stopped talking: prisoners of dogma rendered in the mode of *The Prisoner of Zenda*. In general, *The Milky Way* reveals Buñuel in a relaxed and genial vein, concerned less with protesting at the horrors of religious fanaticism than with amusing himself at the absurdities of doctrinal rigidity.

Neil Sinyard

## Tristana (PG) September 26-27

Director: Luis Buñuel. Spain/Italy/France, 1970.  
Starring: Catherine Deneuve, Fernando Rey, Franco Nero.  
Colour. Spanish dialogue; English subtitles. 105 mins.

It's all in the names. *Tristana* (Catherine Deneuve) is an orphan, a child of woe who is also a daughter of the Church, associated with piousness, innocence, an apparent ignorance of the pleasures of the flesh and of her own charms, which makes her the perfect giver, the bringer of blessings. Don Lope (Fernando Rey) is

the distinguished old aristocrat, a rationalist who scorns the Church and a liberal who sees the iniquities of the class system, which makes him the perfect guardian and, in time, caring spouse. What changes this picture, however, what really defines the relationship, is desire. And, as usual in Buñuel, this takes perverse forms when religion and class are really calling the shots.

*Tristana's* sexual nature is as fetishistic as her religious observance, a self-gratification that she eventually indulges with a (literally) icy malice. Don Lope's is another expression of power, his love a dispensation like his charity to the poor and first and foremost a weapon of control. Buñuel plays the love story between these two—an *amour fou* where the madness is rooted in instincts beyond the reach of love—as a finely controlled switchback of sympathies. The calculation within her devotion, and the hollowness of his social and intellectual authority, become apparent in a dark, ironic comedy of manners. His paternalism and her Mother Church were made for each other, though—in the withering autumnal light which Buñuel casts over the film—it's scarcely a match made in heaven.

Richard Combs

## The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie (La charme discret de la bourgeoisie) (15) October 18-20

Director: Luis Buñuel. France, 1972.  
Starring: Fernando Rey, Delphine Seyrig,  
Stéphane Audran.  
Colour. Subtitled. 105 mins.

With this brilliant comedy of manners and of malice, Buñuel's surrealism moves into a second phase. He is no longer endeavouring overtly to shock the bourgeoisie (which merely provokes outraged rejection): he is poisoning their food. Some critics, incredibly, thought the film demonstrated that Buñuel was growing soft in his old age. It actually shows that he is becoming

THE DISCREET CHARM OF THE BOURGEOISIE





more sly. The plot is a kind of cross between *Dinner at Eight* and *An Inspector Calls*. It indites the complacent and irresponsible middle-classes through a series of events involving interrupted meals and ghosts, all contained within a narrative structure that takes the form of a nightmare from which there is no escape. The unflappable style gives an additional comic dimension to the increasingly paranoid behaviour of the bourgeoisie of the title, whose suave social masks begin to slip under the pressure of events.

Buñuel's satirical sword is double-edged. It derides the rituals of the bourgeoisie by day and their fears by night. The film relishes their discomfort, and proposes that they are both corrupt and incorrigible. Their anxiety about their privileges—variously threatened through the film by the military, the police, the terrorist, the revolutionary—is exceeded only by their reluctance to surrender any of them. When the ambassador wakes from a disquieting dream, in which he has been shot by terrorists when reaching for an extra morsel of food and thus disclosing his hiding place, he makes immediately for the kitchen, proceeding to sit down and gorge himself anew. The gesture crystallises an instinctive acquisitiveness which no amount of persuasion or even subconscious foreboding could check. Whatever forces are thrown against them, the bourgeoisie will stick to the same road.

From about halfway, *Discreet Charm* moves into an extraordinary cycle of dream sequences, the transition from reality being in some cases almost imperceptible. The scenes reflect the inner unease of the bourgeoisie, a realisation and enactment of their most private dreads. The conscious they can control: the unconscious they cannot.

The dreams are of fundamental importance in the film and the answer perhaps to those critics who suggested that Buñuel is seduced by the bourgeoisie even whilst professing to despise them. It is not the bourgeoisie who charm Buñuel in this film: it is he who charms them. They are still the enemy but he has changed tactics and reckons he can get further by not openly offending their values but by suavely reproducing their surface polish and style whilst jabbing subterraneously (and surrealistically) at their insecurity and guilt. In comparison with the blunt methods of his earlier films, *Discreet Charm* offers a more glittering and insinuating attack on cherished targets: the Church, the State, bourgeois morality. It has the civilised sheen of a work like Swift's *A Modest Proposal*, which is also funny, also about eating things, and also quite deadly in its inverted social attack.

Neil Sinyard

## *The Phantom of Liberty (La Fantôme de la Liberté)* (18) September 16-17

Director: Luis Buñuel. France, 1974.  
Starring: Bernard Verley, Muni, Jean-Claude Brialy, Monica Vitti.  
Colour. Subtitled. 104 mins.

A mother and father insist that their child has disappeared, despite the girl's own insistence to them that she has not. A child is given some rude pictures in a park and has them swiftly confiscated by her disapproving but strangely excited parents: they turn out to be pictures of French tourist attractions. People go to the toilet in public and eat in guilty privacy. Buñuel's *The Phantom of Liberty* is a series of pointed reversals of expectations which contribute to an examination of the relativity of social norms and values. It is a bracing surrealist comedy and a relaxed variation on the themes of a lifetime, with ideas and images that are both fresh in context and yet strike sparks across Buñuel's entire career (from *Un Chien Andalou* through *Los Olvidados* and *The Exterminating Angel* to *Tristana*).

"Through surrealism I realised for the first time that man isn't free", Buñuel said. "I believe in the total liberty of man but surrealism showed me a discipline to follow". Surrealism



THE PHANTOM OF LIBERTY

THAT OBSCURE OBJECT OF DESIRE



and discipline: one of the richest paradoxes of Buñuel's career has been a vision of life that tends to anarchy and a visual style that is a model of disciplined economy. Moving a glass-cased spider next to the clock on the mantelpiece, Jean-Claude Brialy in this film declares: "I'm fed up with symmetry". Buñuel hates the symmetry of life, but he loves the symmetry of cinema. The film might seem a freewheeling survey of mindless or malevolent eccentricity, but it is tightly framed, propelled by a subtle narrative sense and brilliantly held together by the leitmotif of authoritarian absurdity, be it the authority of parent over child, captor over captive, murderer over victim, lecturer over audience, doctor over patient.

The thematic consistency of the film is contained in the ambiguous title. On the one hand, it is a summary of a key Buñuel theme: liberty as a phantom, as something intangible, always beyond our grasp and yet a haunting ideal that must always be pursued. Yet liberty is a phantom in another sense: a ghost, something terrifying from which people flee. Fearing to be in

charge of their own destiny and their own feelings, people become slaves of social custom, and of the roles which uniform (and uniformity) demand, seeing without observing, acting out of convention rather than conviction. The ostrich that is a recurrent symbol in the film and that stares balefully out at the camera in the last shot, might be Buñuel's most impudent and scornful image for a humanity with a tragic tendency to bury its head in the sand.

Neil Sinyard

## *That Obscure Object of Desire (Cet obscur objet du désir)* (18)

September 10-13

Director: Luis Buñuel. France/Spain, 1977.  
Starring: Fernando Rey, Angela Molina, Carole Bouquet.  
Colour. Subtitled. 103 mins.

*That Obscure Object of Desire* is one of Buñuel's 'impasse' films, a subject he made virtually his own, in which erotic desire, social prohibition and psychological inhibition conduct a merry dance leading nowhere—except, usually, into some form of religious psychosis. But *Obscure Object* is also a late Buñuel—in fact, his last film—and the mood of fetishistic enclosure that one finds, say, in *Tristana*, is lightened by something else, by miraculous 'escapes' from impasse, by a mood of airy inconsequentiality which seems to suggest that characters can go anywhere, do anything, desire everything. It's the atmosphere of a dream, perhaps—that perennial surrealist setting—where everything is possible and nothing, in the end, is attainable.

The mood is summed up by the title of another of these films, *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, the old surrealist's wry acknowledgment that the bourgeoisie are possessed of their own form of mental surrealism, which allows any social gaffe, any horror or outrage to be instantly elided, forgotten, transformed into something else. *Obscure Object* takes the duelling couple theme of *Tristana* and turns it into this kind of taunting dream: Fernando Rey is no longer the Spanish grandee of earlier Buñuel but an anonymous French businessman who takes a fancy to his Spanish maid, then finds his advances constantly evaded, mocked and thwarted (his dream object played, with a casual interchangeability, by two very different actresses). He's infuriated by her erotic 'terrorism', she in turn accuses him of financial terrorism in trying to own her, and on the sidelines, a different kind of terrorism is always erupting...

Richard Combs



# Léos Carax

"I try to be a beginner"

ALMOST FOUR years in the making, Léos Carax's *Les Amants du Pont-Neuf*, a virtual two-hander about homeless lovers on the Seine's oldest bridge, became France's most expensive movie and acquired the status of a national scandal. The lengthy and troubled shoot that turned this simple Parisian romance into a mega-budget spectacular has its genesis in an injury to leading man Denis Lavant at exactly the time when Carax had secured a permit to film on the Pont-Neuf itself while the structure underwent major repairs. Filming was shut down, the permit was never to be renewed, and after many delays Carax and his crew moved the production to a lake in the South of France, where a vast replica of the bridge and its environs had been constructed. The money was to run out on several occasions before Carax, who was either attacked as a megalomaniac or fêted as a visionary, finished the film; but its reputation as the French *Heaven's Gate* gave it little chance of making back the 150 million franc budget (around £16m) from its home box office.

Away from all the brouhaha, Carax is able to talk about the piece itself rather than the controversial chain of events that brought it to completion. *Les Amants du Pont-Neuf* is the third feature in the past decade from the enigmatic 32-year-old (Carax is not his real name by all accounts) and marks the final part in a loose trilogy comprising 1983's *Boy Meets Girl* and *Mauvais Sang/The Night Is Young* in 1986. Collaborating on each occasion with cameraman Jean-Yves Escoffier, leading man Denis Lavant and his girlfriends of the time, Mireille Perrier and Juliette Binoche ("It always starts with the girl", says Carax, "I always wrote about the girls I was living with"), his achievement throughout the trio has been to turn the most familiar and leaden love story scenarios into cinematic gold by mere virtue of his astonishing visual style, a cine-literate gift for composition and movement that exists almost independently from his rather off-hand grasp of narrative.

At first compared to those other major 80s Gallic stylists Jean-Jacques Beineix and Luc Besson, Carax himself prefers to acknowledge his debt to a much earlier generation of our movie heritage. "The real subject of films should be joy and I think the pioneers of film-making had that real passion during the silent era", he reflects. "I relate to silent films much better than the stupid kind of naivety we see these days.

That King Vidor film *The Crowd*; I haven't seen anything since that tells you so much about what it is to be a woman, what it is to lose everything, what it is to confront death."

"So I try to be a beginner. I try to put myself in a position where I don't know what I'm doing. It might sound a little pretentious to say that, but it's because of the sheer intuition in *Les Amants du Pont-Neuf* that makes it more interesting to me than my other work. It was the first picture I've made where I was lost in my personal life and lost on the set, so instead of being the person who pretended he knew what he was doing, I started the film looking for something but not knowing what."

Appropriately, he reserves most praise for Lavant and Binoche, whose commitment to the project held firm all the way through the travails of production. "They're the best actors in the world", he maintains. "I wrote the script for them and it couldn't have been made with anybody else. They were so generous in making the film, and it seems to me that what they express on screen is so strong that I want audiences to see it and share in it. I'd love to go around the world from country to country, just showing it to artists, writers, poets..."

Trevor Johnston

## Boy Meets Girl (15)

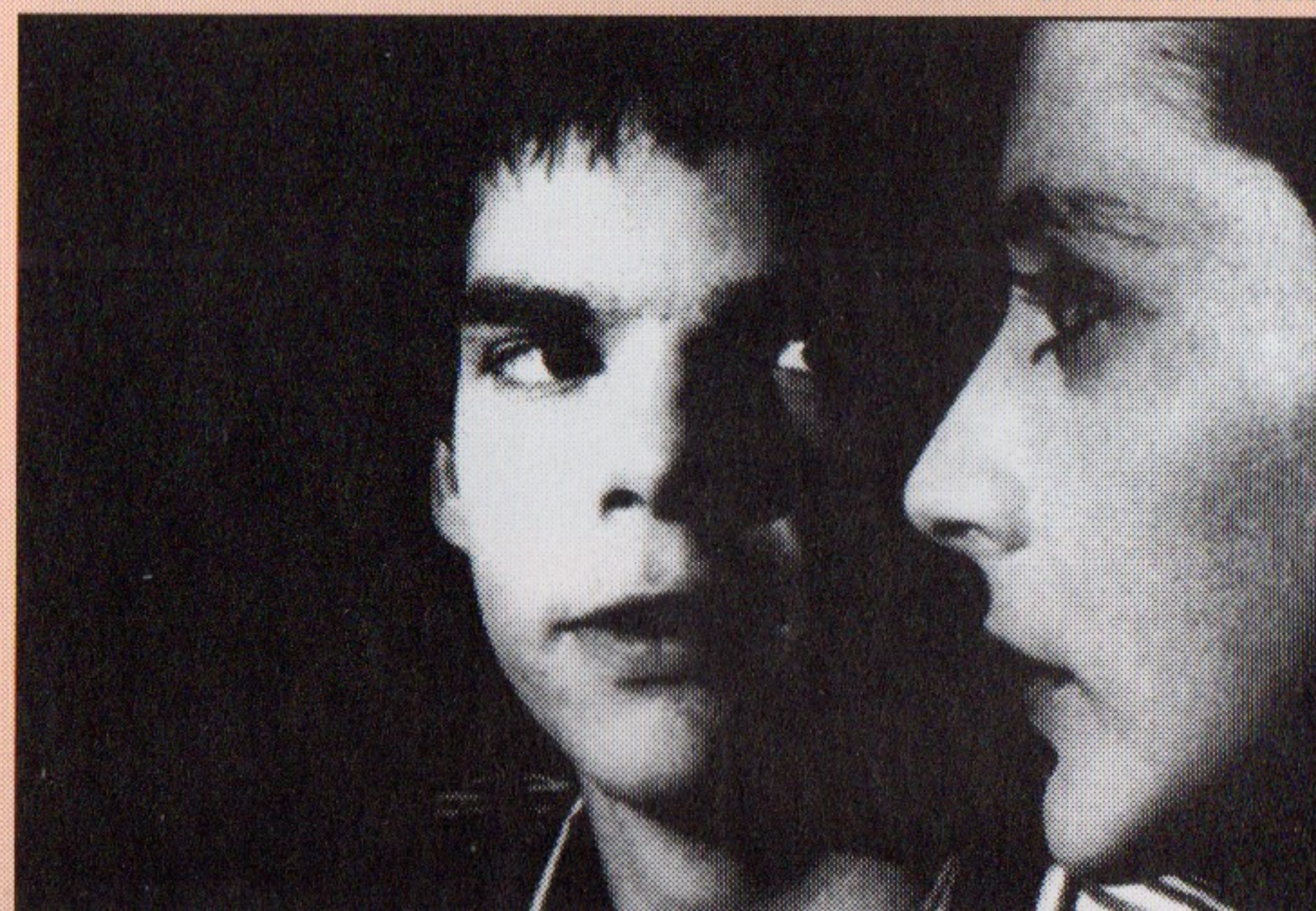
September 17

Director: Léos Carax. France, 1984.  
Starring: Denis Lavant, Mireille Perrier, Ellie Poicard.  
Black and white. Subtitled. 104 mins.

"I started making films at the same time I was discovering the cinema", says Carax of this still startling debut feature. "I felt such an immense gratitude that I would actually be adding to this great body of images and I guess you can see that it is my first film. It's obvious."

In a moody Paris cityscape peopled by all manner of losers and marginal figures, existentially moody outsider Alex (Denis Lavant) contrives at length to get it together with the beautiful Mireille Perrier. Carax's cinematic calling card, shot when he was only 23, swiftly makes apparent his strengths and weaknesses. But the haphazard construction and occasionally ill-advised moments of philosophising are offset by

BOY MEETS GIRL



THE NIGHT IS YOUNG

the film's vividly conceived visual transformation of the French capital into an evocative monochrome dreamland. Whether setting the action underneath a starry night sky or in the gloomiest of interiors, Jean-Yves Escoffier's cinematography is quite memorable, while Carax's admiration for silent films at their most surreal or expressionistic has never seemed so clear.

Trevor Johnston

## The Night Is Young (Mauvais Sang) (15)

September 23-24

Director: Léos Carax. France, 1986.  
Starring: Denis Lavant, Juliette Binoche, Michel Piccoli.  
Colour. Subtitled. 120 mins.

"I wasn't pleased with the way I directed Juliette [Binoche] in *Mauvais Sang*, but at least I was able to show her that she could be beautiful and feminine. Before then she was a little boyish", says Carax of his leading lady, whose subsequent international career included major parts in Phil Kaufman's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Louis Malle's forthcoming screen version of the best-seller *Damage*, and the role of Cathy in the new film of *Wuthering Heights*. In this vaguely futurist love story she plays the mistress of Michel Piccoli's elderly gangster, who is involved with Denis Lavant as part of a gang planning to

steal the serum which will cure a mysterious, Aids-like virus that's sweeping the country. Naturally, Lavant and Binoche fall in love.

Bursting into extravagant colour, Carax's film stirs up memories of *Pierrot le Fou*-era Godard, and while the would-be poetic dialogue perhaps loses something in translation, the Frenchman's flair for creating an alternative universe with the camera is here at its most energetic. "Making the film was a kind of joy. It was so intense", recalls Carax, "but I felt that I had used the camera and the film-making to protect me from life. I was so happy to be making a second film that the lighting, the camerawork, the choreography of the actors, was perhaps a little too controlled. Afterwards, I knew that my next film would have to be something a bit more raw."

Trevor Johnston

## Les Amants du Pont-Neuf (The Lovers on the Pont-Neuf) (18)

September 18-October 8

Director: Léos Carax. France, 1991.  
Starring: Juliette Binoche, Denis Lavant, Klaus-Michael Grüber.  
Colour. Dolby stereo. Subtitled. 125 mins.

Alex (Denis Lavant) is a despairing down-and-out who has made his home on the Pont-Neuf





LES AMANTS DU PONT-NEUF

bridge during its temporary closure for reconstruction work. Staggering drunkenly home one night after a car has run over his ankle, he finds Michele (Juliette Binoche) sleeping on his usual patch. She's an art student from a comfortable home, but a terrible degenerative eye disease and some unexplained trauma from the recent past have left her out on the streets. Initially wary of each other, an unlikely emotional attachment soon grows between these two outsiders. While she helps him back to health to resume his fire-eating act, he in turn lets her stay on the bridge and work at her drawing until her sight grows too weak to continue. A massive firework celebration lighting up the city sets the seal on their ecstatic affair, but when a poster campaign featuring Michele's face springs up all over the underground, it's a sign that her family are trying to contact her and the two lovers may have to part.

Carax's opening sequences on the night-time streets of Paris are shocking in their raw depiction of the homeless underclass and announce a less manicured approach to his imagery than

was the case in *Boy Meets Girl* and *Mauvais Sang/The Night Is Young*. And although *Les Amants*' tale of mismatched romance remains consistent with the subject matter of its two predecessors, here the young director's gift for drawing emotional impact from his instinctive visual command comes through more strongly than before. It might sound corny to say it, but he's one of the few film-makers around whose stories of romance actually bring to the screen the complex feeling of being in love.

"I'm interested in joy", says Carax, and certainly the eye-boggling set-piece where Lavant and Binoche career along the Seine on a stolen speedboat while the city erupts in a firework display conveys a rare sense of exhilaration. Says Carax, "It's like everything is on fire around them and they look at each other. There is so much noise that they can't hear, but there's a rope connecting them. Some people just see it as a big scene that cost a lot of money, but that look between Denis and Juliette is the shot that I'm most proud of."

Trevor Johnston

## Secret Friends (15)

October 2-8

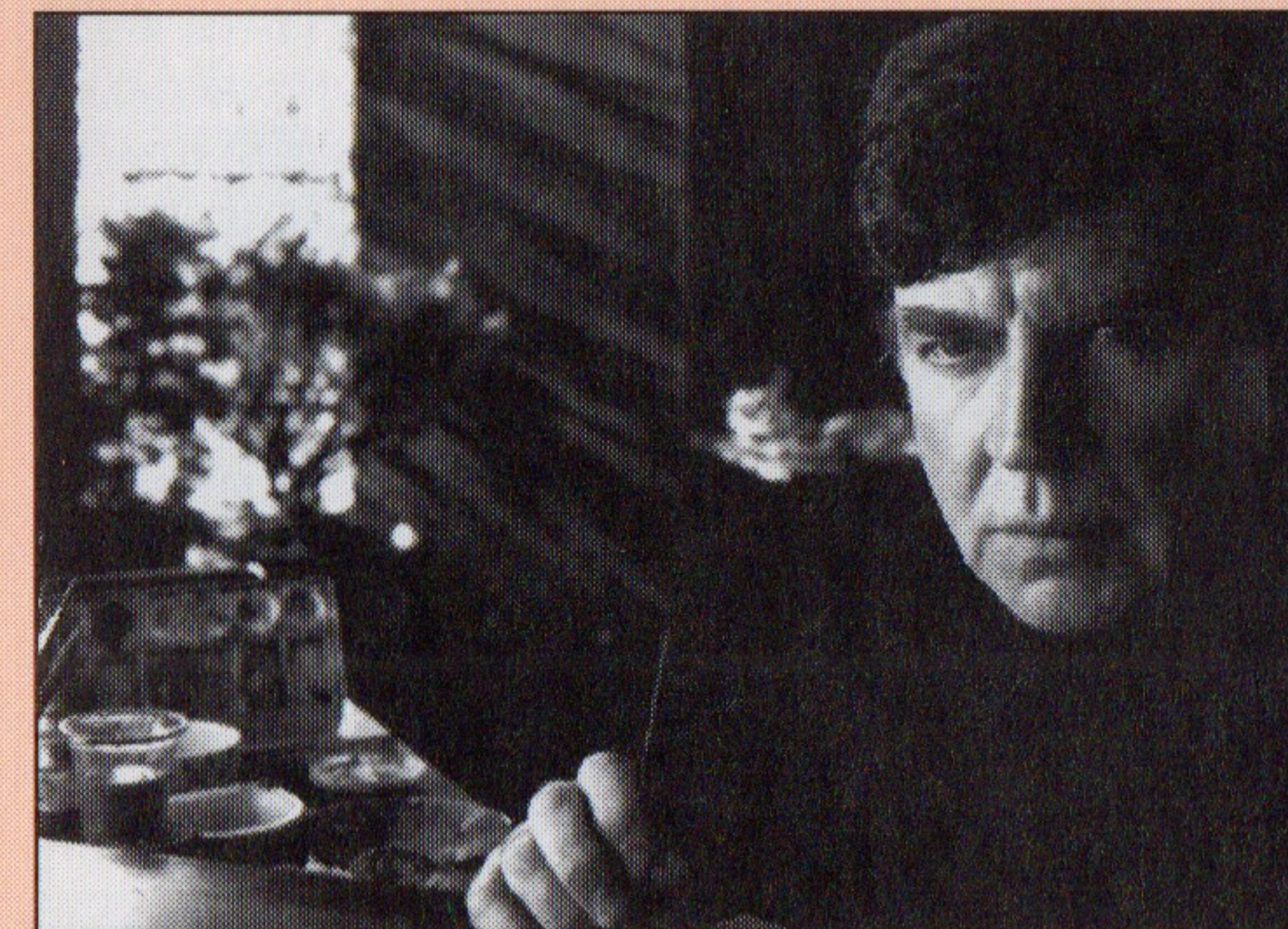
Director: Dennis Potter. U.K., 1992.

Starring: Alan Bates, Gina Bellman, Frances Barber.  
Colour. Dolby stereo. 98 mins.

Based on his novel *Ticket to Ride*, Dennis Potter's new film revisits his familiar territory—the psyche as a dark hall of mirrors. Alan Bates plays John, an artist specialising in depictions of flowers, who seems to lose his memory on a train journey. As he struggles to piece his identity together, visions come to him of his vicarage childhood with a strait-laced father and almost silent mother; and of his wife Helen (Gina Bellman), whom he appears to have met when she was a hotel call-girl and he was her client. But are their roles of tart and trick simply part of a game that has run riot in John's imagination? Or does Helen's own imagination have a part to play here as well? No-one's role remains stable for long, as characters come face to face with their own doubles—the 'secret friends' of the title.

If the theme and its treatment seem familiar, that's inevitable, since Potter has always obsessively recycled his material. Here there are references to his TV series *The Singing Detective* and *Blackeyes* (not least in his use of actress Bellman). But this is a more enclosed and—on the surface at least—more realistic drama than either of those. Because we're not used to seeing Potter material in the cinema, the effect can be startling, particularly when we're faced with Bates's extravagant performance, which seems to call for the more theatrical containment of the small screen. The subject matter, too, takes Potter's alleged misogyny to a new extreme, and it is up to the viewer to decide whether the film is a misogynist fantasy or a fantasy about misogyny.

Jonathan Romney



SECRET FRIENDS



IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

## Immaculate Conception (15)

October 17-22

Director: Jamil Dehlave. U.K., 1992.

Starring: James Wilby, Melissa Leo, Shabana Azmi, Zia Mohyeddin.

Colour. Dolby stereo. English and Urdu dialogue;  
English subtitles. 120 mins.

Imagine a country where third world poverty exists alongside the opulent life-styles of the upper classes, where the cost of a book published in the West could feed a family for a week, where people dream of getting visas for the United States.

This is the Pakistan that lies outside the sanitised compound of the ultra-modern house inhabited by Alastair (James Wilby), a British conservationist, and Hannah (Melissa Leo), his Jewish-American wife. Superficially, they enjoy an idyllic expatriate lifestyle, but there is tension beneath the smooth surface of their marriage. *Immaculate Conception* deals with the world in which this couple find themselves lost. They are desperate to have a child, and when conventional methods fail they resort to visiting the fertility shrine of Gulab Shah in Karachi, which is run by eunuchs. Before they can receive the blessing of the shrine, however, they have to convert to Islam and promise to return with the child. What follows is a catalogue of misunderstandings and confusion. Hannah's father is an influential senator, and news of her conversion in the U.S. media causes a diplomatic incident. The tension mounts and the couple's cosy existence begins to crumble.

Director Jamil Dehlave (a British based filmmaker who also made *The Blood of Hussain* in Pakistan) opens a window on a sub-culture that is hardly known of outside the Indian sub-continent—the world of the eunuchs. The sympathetic yet unblinkered portrayal of this culture is the most fascinating aspect of the movie, and Zia Mohyeddin's committed performance as the eunuch leader of the shrine is a *tour de force*.

Pervaiz Khan





## Juice (15)

October 23-25

Director: Ernest R. Dickerson. U.S.A., 1992.  
Starring: Omar Epps, Tupac Shakur, Khalil Kain.  
Colour. Dolby stereo. 92 mins.

Spike Lee's regular cameraman Ernest Dickerson makes an auspicious debut as writer and director with this powerful study of urban black youth, following the fortunes of four teenage buddies as they become inexorably drawn into the neighbourhood's continuing cycle of despair. Nicknamed 'Q' by all and sundry, Quincy's hopes of getting out of the ghetto rest on his developing turn-table skills as a hip-hop mix-master. But the path ahead is not quite so clear cut for his pals. With zero job prospects and with antagonism gradually mounting between his friends and a rival gang of Puerto Ricans, the highly disgruntled Bishop (Tupac Shakur) starts planning the robbery of a nearby grocery store, the logic of the streets being that carrying a gun and committing a crime is the only way to command respect. It may be proof you've got the requisite bottle—or, as the local terminology would have it, the "juice"—but when firearms become part and parcel of everyday realities, death, destruction and paranoia are certain to follow...

After a snappy credits sequence establishing the New York milieu, Dickerson's approach

seems rather underpowered in the film's opening section. Our central quartet roll out of bed, meet up in the streets and mooch around the neighbourhood. Compared with the work of Dickerson's mentor Spike Lee, it's all rather low key at first. But the film gradually develops into a deeply humane study of cause and effect, with the second half's spiral of violence gaining in weight and insight when we've come to understand, more or less by a process of osmosis, the set of circumstances which have spawned it. Even if the gun-toting Bishop goes off the rails, Dickerson portrays him not as some psychotic crazy but a young man desperate to make an impression on a world from which he is already disenfranchised.

Although it's arguable that the film becomes rather less compelling as it speeds towards a conventional final-reel showdown, Dickerson's achievement is not unreminiscent of *Boyz N the Hood*—an authentic and unpatronising portrayal of ordinary lives and the struggle to eke out a sense of dignity from the most barren of surroundings. Turned out on obviously modest resources, there's a feeling throughout that it's a movie the film-makers simply had to get out of their systems. This *Juice* is made from a lifetime of concentrated experience.

Trevor Johnston

## Straight Out of Brooklyn

(15)

October 16, 23-29

Director: Matty Rich. U.S.A., 1991.  
Starring: George T. Odom, Ann D. Sanders, Lawrence Gilliard Jr.  
Colour. 83 mins.

This impressive first feature by 19-year-old Matty Rich, which won the Special Jury Prize at last year's Sundance Film Festival of independent American cinema, is based on the lives of

STRAIGHT OUT OF BROOKLYN



real people from the film-makers own experiences. It tells the story of the Brown family. Ray (George T. Odom) is a black man who has spent years in a low-paying job. He blames white people because he cannot provide his family with even the basic necessities. Ray takes out his anger and frustration on his wife, Frankie (Ann D. Sanders). Despite the savage abuse she takes from her husband, Frankie tries to hold the family together. The Brown's son, Dennis (Lawrence Gilliard Jr), searches for a quick way to get his family out of its bleak situation and into the American Dream. He and his friends plot a risky robbery in the belief that this is the way "straight out of Brooklyn".

Matty Rich is one of a group of new black American directors whose films have generated a lot of interest. Although raw and unpolished by Hollywood standards, *Straight Out of Brooklyn* successfully confronts the real social problems of inner city life in America. Filmed on location around Brooklyn's Red Hook housing project, it is brutally frank in its depiction of a struggling black, working-class family. Rich presents us with disturbing images and raises hard questions about social, economic and racial issues, leaving us to find our own answers. Yet he does offer some hope, as confirmed in his stated belief that, if we are to live in what he describes as a "rainbow society", we must understand how others cope with their circumstances.

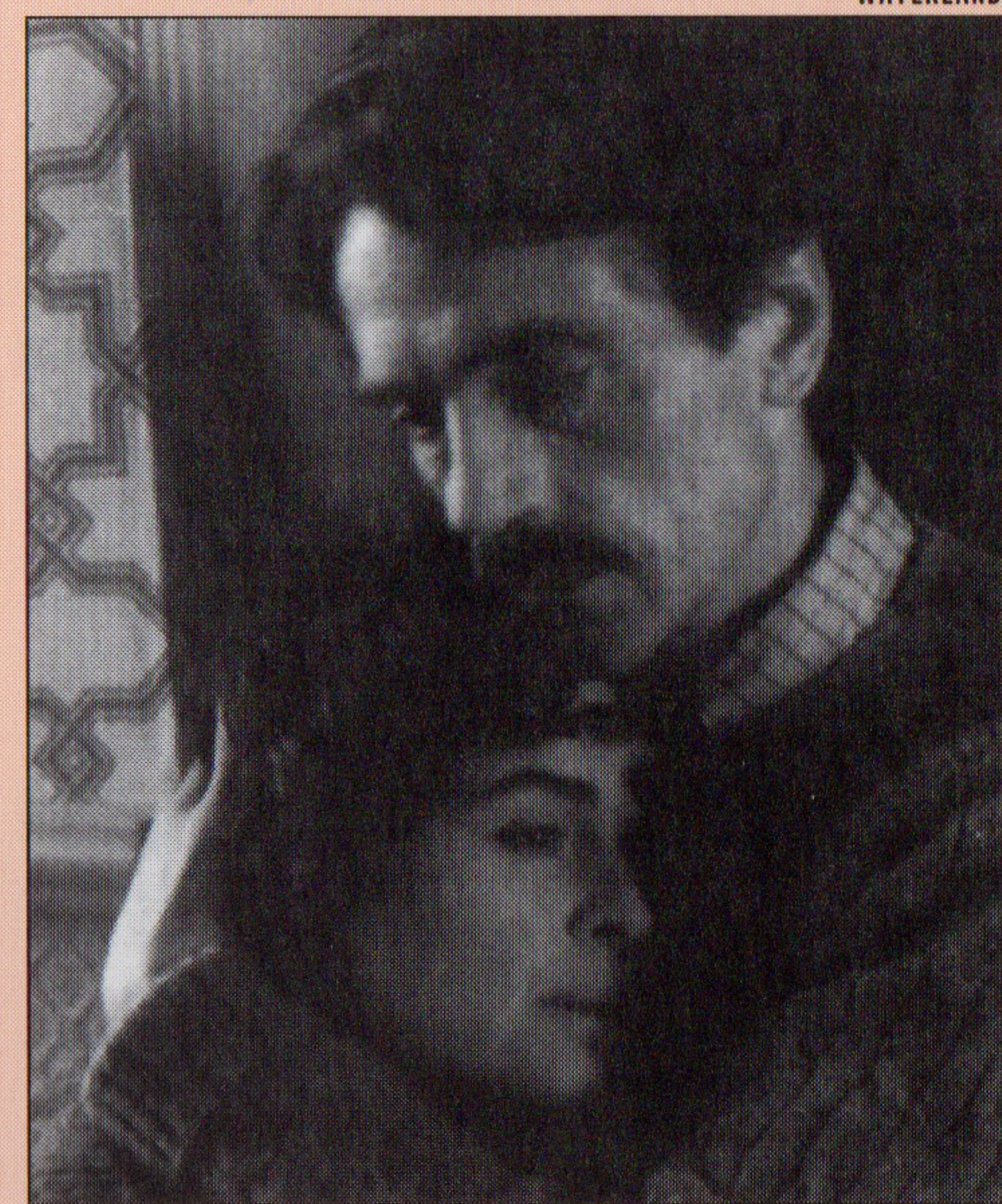
## Waterland (15)

October 27-31

Director: Stephen Gyllenhaal. U.K., 1992.  
Starring: Jeremy Irons, Ethan Hawke, Sinead Cusack.  
Colour. Panavision. Dolby stereo. 93 mins

*Based on the novel by Graham Swift, Waterland has been adapted for the screen by scriptwriter Peter Prince and director Stephen Gyllenhaal (Paris Trout). Jeremy Irons stars as the hero/narrator, Tom Crick, a history teacher who confronts his students' indifference and his own uncertainties by exploring memories of his experiences in East Anglia during the Second World War.*

On his second theatrical feature, Stephen Gyllenhaal finally 'graduates' from his TV days by going into wide screen (Gyllenhaal's first feature, *Certain Fury*, had less impact here in 1986 than the recent release of one of his TV films, *Paris Trout*). Scope would seem to be an inevitable choice for an adaptation of Graham Swift's acclaimed novel, set in the endlessly horizontal world of the Fenlands, that strange wet corner of East Anglia. Gyllenhaal, however, apparently had to fight to get the extra screen



space on a budget that was generous by British standards but modest in any other terms. In a way, *Waterland* represents a triumph over two 'foreign' elements, since Gyllenhaal uses the wide screen not to linger over natural beauties but to fix on the emotional lives of his characters. And he seems perfectly at ease with such a pre-eminently English subject, capturing time, place and behaviour so precisely that one forgets for a moment how the isolated, inbred community here is not that far removed from the Southern hotspot of *Paris Trout*.

The American influence, though, is not entirely absent. The framing scenes of Swift's novel—which twists and turns in a complicated chronology, even when its historical background is cut—have been shifted from London to Pittsburgh. In them, Tom Crick (Jeremy Irons), a middle-aged history teacher, is stranded in his classroom, facing a generation that no longer sees the point in studying history when so many forces are conspiring to bring it to an end. Crick's solution is to search for lessons in his own past, telling stories of his adolescent first love, of his grandfather, a politically subversive brewer, and of a family heritage of murder, madness and incest. It's a hard story to wrest from Swift's ever-lecturing, ever-digressing hero/narrator, but Gyllenhaal and screenwriter Peter Prince give a powerful logic and conviction to all this melodrama happening in no less than three 'countries' of the past.

Richard Combs



## Swoon (18) October 13, 30-31

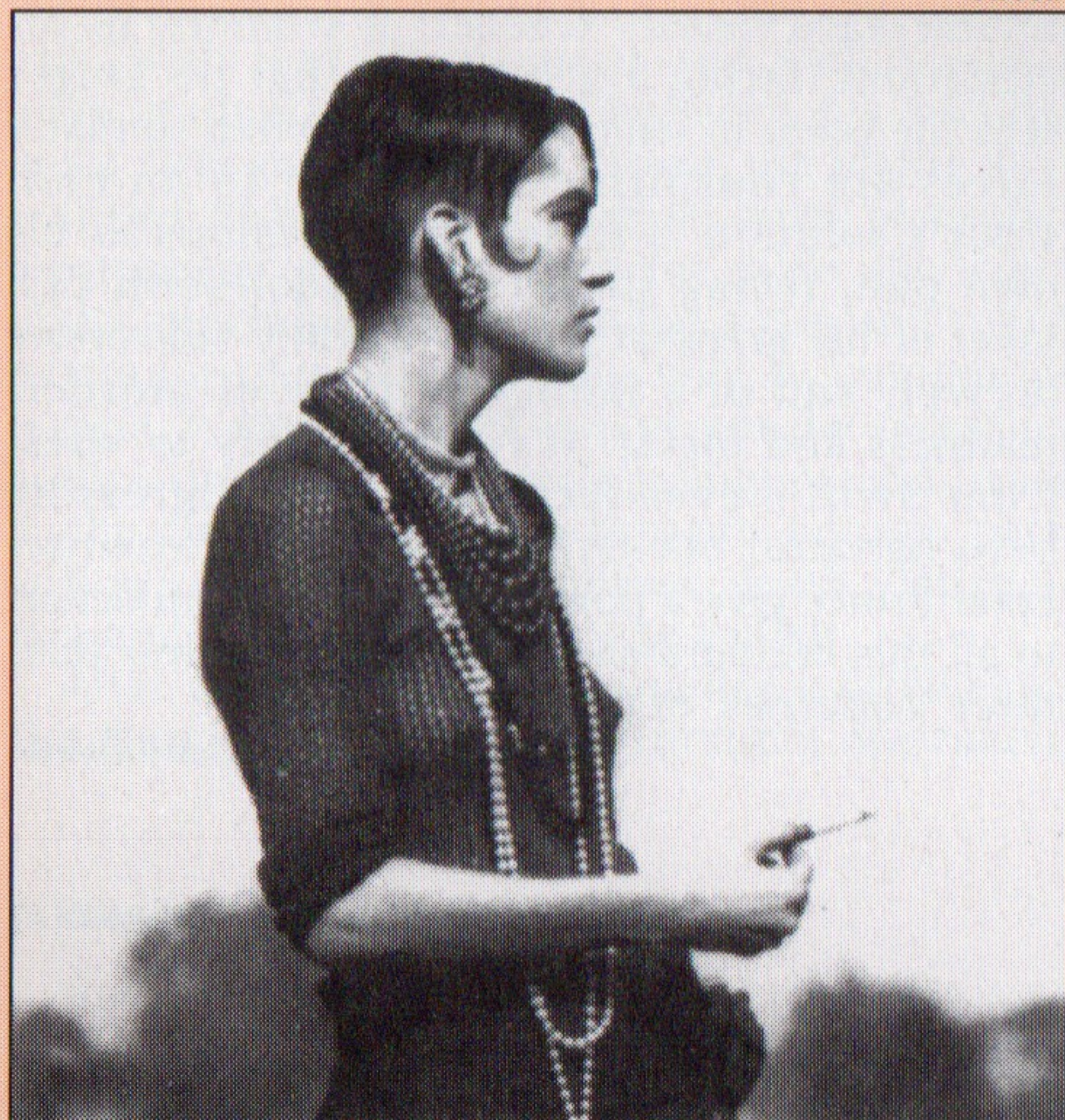
Director: Tom Kalin. U.S.A., 1992.  
Starring: Daniel Schlachet, Craig Chester, Ron Vavter.  
Black and white. 82 mins.

The 1924 conviction of wealthy Jewish students Nathan Leopold Jr. and Richard Loeb for the kidnap and murder of a young boy named Bobby Franks scandalised Chicago and drew press attention from all over the world. With its potent aura of unmotivated transgression, the case has continued to fascinate crime aficionados and movie-makers alike, inspiring both Hitchcock's *Rope* (1948) and Richard Fleischer's 1959 version of Meyer Levin's novel *Compulsion* before the latest and most audacious treatment of the same events in Tom Kalin's auspicious directorial debut, *Swoon*.

Putting the sexual elements upfront, and blending documentary footage, monochrome melodrama and formal innovation, Kalin's film sees the whole trail of misdemeanours perpetrated by Leopold and Loeb as predicated on an exchange of sex for criminal activity, which had the effect of driving them on to ever more extreme undertakings. As the director writes in a statement accompanying the piece, "The planning and execution of Bobby Frank's murder—their 'perfect crime'—was the culmination of Nathan's obsessive love for Richard and Richard's lifelong fantasies of becoming a master criminal. The murder became a skewed and symbolic marriage . . ."

*Swoon* seeks to investigate the hysteria surrounding the reporting of the trial and foreground the Leopold/Loeb affair as a key moment in the development of "the myth of gay desire as inherently violent or murderous". The film's elliptical and fragmentary narrative indicates that the pair's actions aren't as easily contained or explained as the previous mainstream read-

SWOON



ings tended to suggest. Famed attorney Clarence Darrow's groundbreaking psychological defence claimed the men's "inversion" made them not legally responsible for their actions; but by exploring the laws of desire, Kalin re-orders historical assumptions in a way that's no less comfortable for today's viewers. Queer cinema indeed.

Trevor Johnston



EL NORTE

We are showing *El Norte* as part of Oxfam's *Time for a Fairer World* Festival. Festival brochures with further details are on display in the foyer.

## El Norte (15) October 1 (6.00 p.m.)

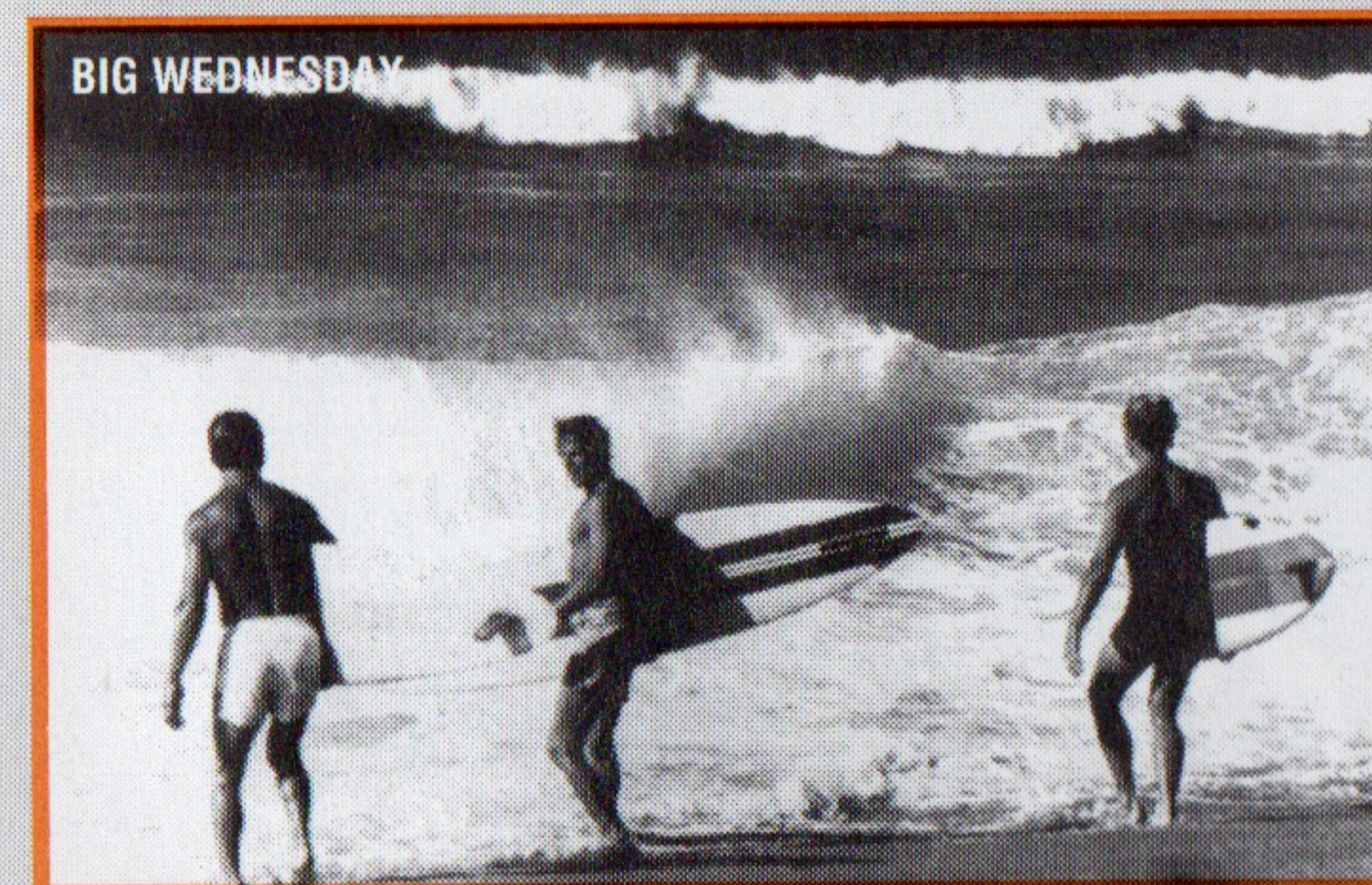
Director: Gregory Nava. U.S.A., 1983.  
Starring: Ernesto Gomez Cruz, David Villalpando, Zaide Silvia Gutierrez, Alicia Del Lago, Miguel Gomez Giron.  
Colour. 140 mins.

After a military massacre of labourers in Guatemala, which leaves his father's head dangling from a tree, Enrique takes his sister Rosa and heads off for the fabled land of opportunity, *El Norte* or North America, where every house has running water, every man a job. Unfortunately Mexico, with its border guards and illegal operators who smuggle wetback labour, stands in the way; but after crawling several miles through a sewage pipe full of rats, Los Angeles is within sight. Life there without a permit, however, proves harder than down among the rats. Traditional immigrant films from Hollywood (*The Godfather?*) end in fame, money and beautiful women for the inheritors of the new found land's promise; but *El Norte* gives us a vision of the downside of the American dream. The film's concentration on the plight of its young hopefuls, however, is done with much humour and compassion, so that the tragedy of its message is very bracing.

Chris Peachment/Time Out

## Matinees AND Late Nights

Please see the calendar on the back cover for performance times.



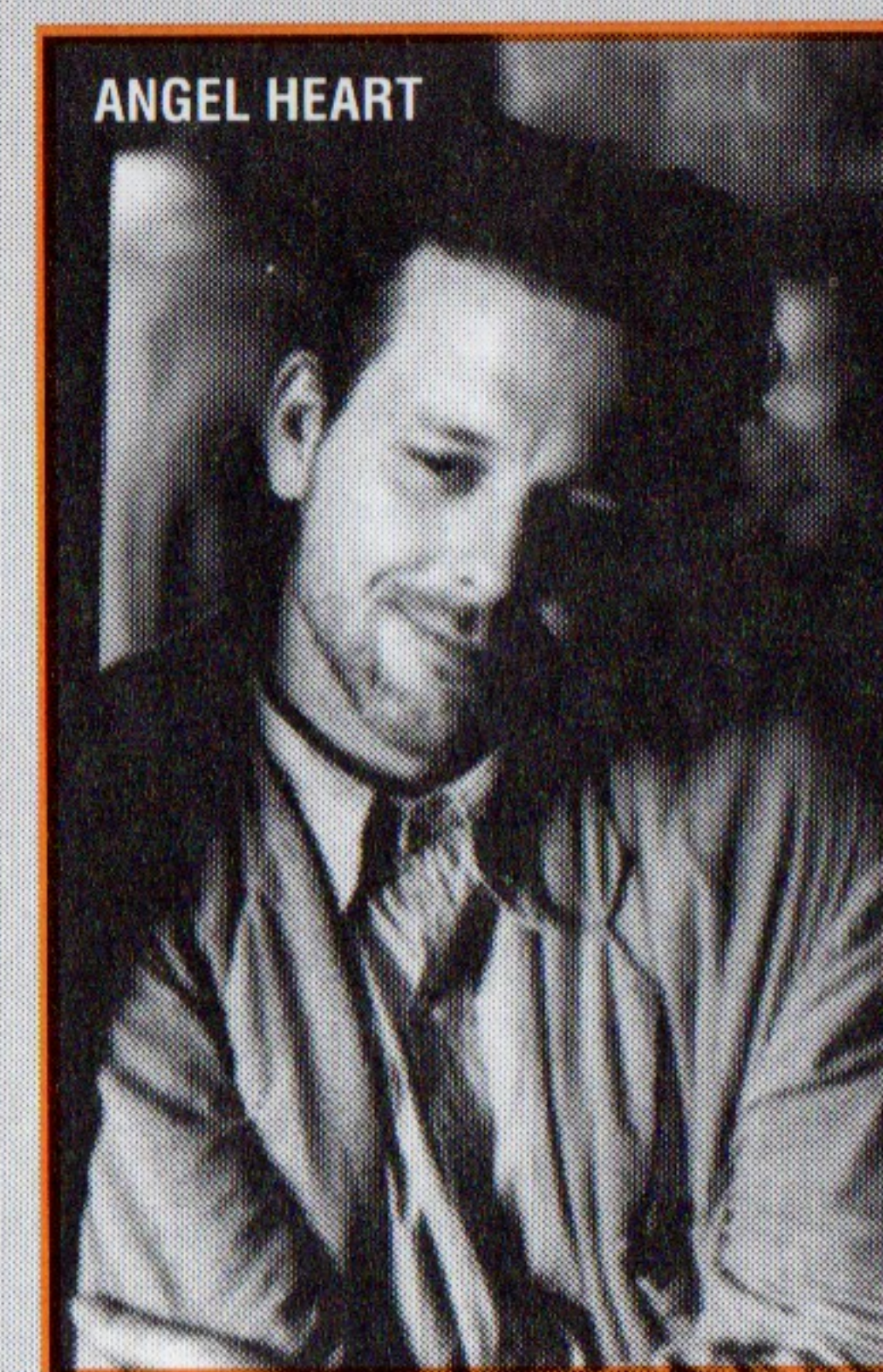
## Big Wednesday (PG) September 4-6

See under Main Films for notes.

## Angel Heart (18) September 10-13

Director: Alan Parker.  
U.S.A. 1987.  
Starring: Mickey Rourke,  
Robert De Niro.  
Colour. Dolby stereo.  
113 mins.

Based on William Hjortsberg's novel *Falling Angel*, Alan Parker's film is set in the 1950s and has seedy New York detective Harry Angel (Mickey Rourke) being hired by a mysterious businessman (Robert De Niro) to find a missing singer who dabbled in the occult. Rourke turns in a commanding performance in yet another role that capitalises on his toe-rag appearance. The film has the added bonus of seeing Rourke play opposite De Niro, who provides a suave incarnation of ultimate Evil.



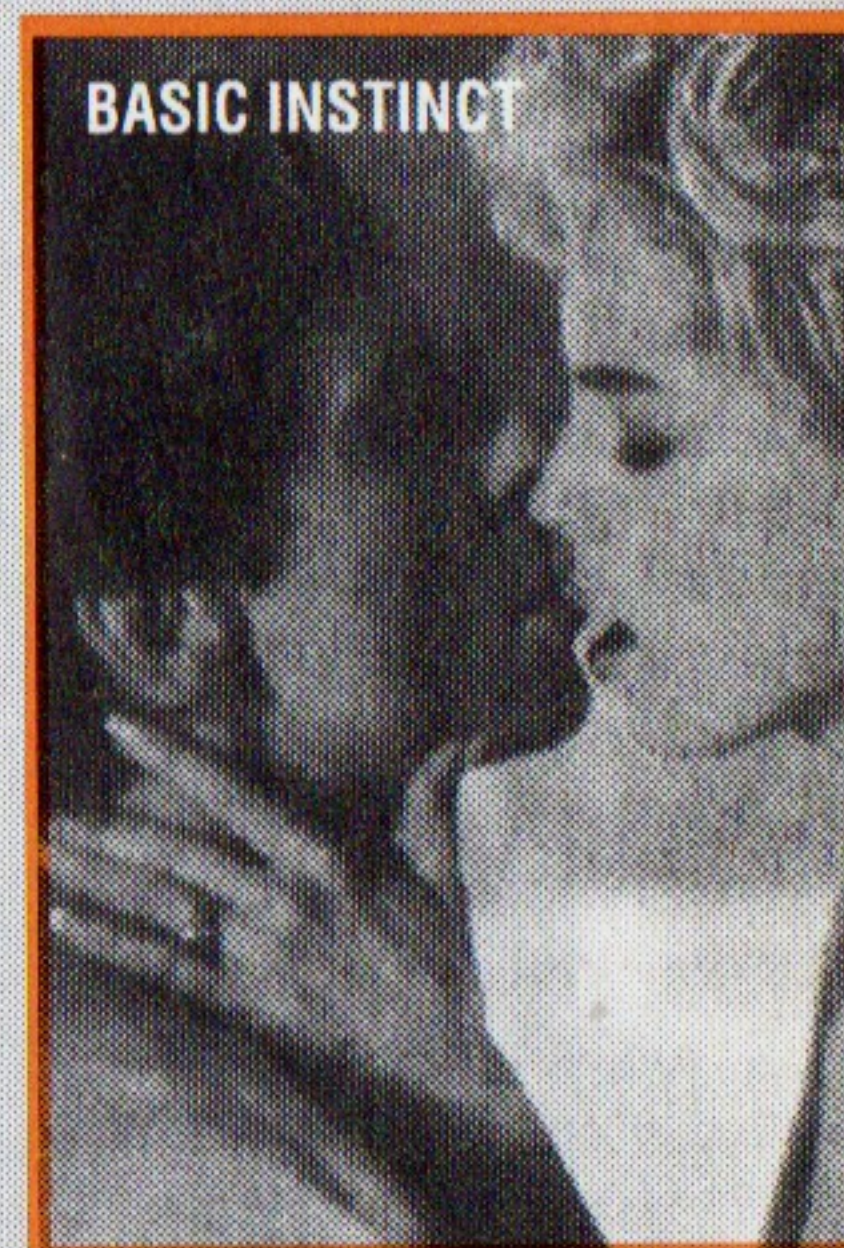
## Basic Instinct (18) September 17-20

Director: Paul Verhoeven. U.S.A., 1991.  
Starring: Michael Douglas, Sharon Stone, George Dzundza.  
Colour. Panavision. Dolby stereo. 128 mins.

Paul Verhoeven's troubled film, scripted by Joe Eszterhas, is a gutsy, tough West Coast cop thriller with lashings of sex and obsession. Michael Douglas's Nick Curran is yet another cop on the edge. Investigated for an over-zealous approach to his work, saddled with drink and relationship problems, Nick becomes slowly embroiled with the case and then the suspect when a former rock star is found murdered at the climax of some bondage-style sex. Sharon Stone's Catherine Tramell, an ultra-clever, ultra-rich author and bisexual free spirit, is at the core of all the basic instinct paraded in this film.

Aided and abetted by Verhoeven's raunchy, no holds barred direction, Stone smoulders and snarls: one scene in which she teases and bosses a roomful of hard law enforcement men is probably the best illustration of post-feminism in action that Hollywood has yet offered. Yet the film's depiction of not one, but several, bisexual women with murky, murderous pasts has angered activists in the States and does illustrate that sensitivity is not always Eszterhas's or Verhoeven's strong suit. It is also true that the action promises far better than the convoluted, confused ending actually delivers. But if you like things unrestrained, hard, adult and off-the-rails, then Douglas and Stone are superb, and George Dzundza (as sidekick Gus) delivers yet another classic, hard-boiled cameo.

Steve Grant/Time Out



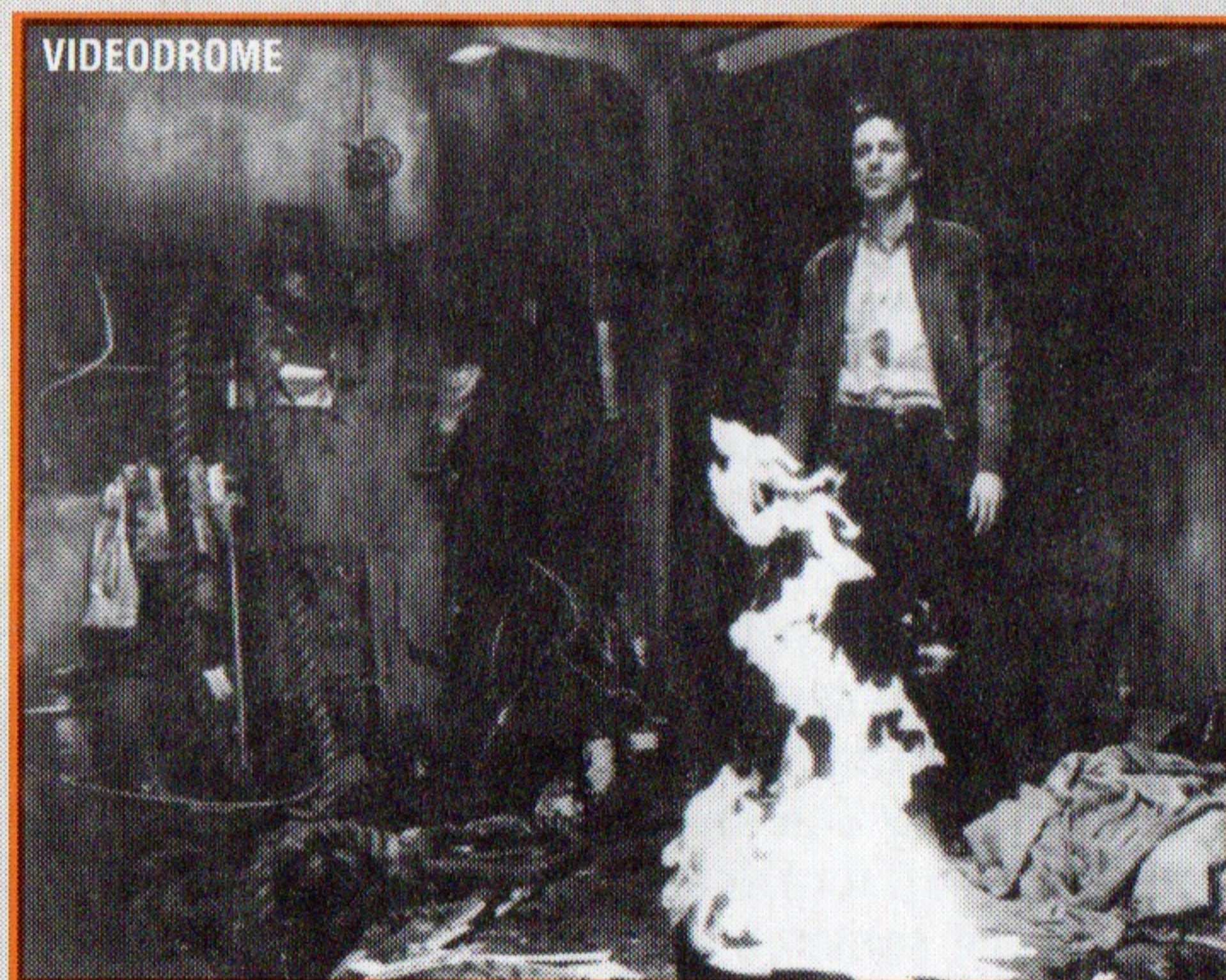
## Videodrome (18) September 24-27

Director: David Cronenberg. U.S.A., 1982.  
Starring: James Woods, Sonja Smits, Deborah Harry.  
Colour. 89 mins.

David Cronenberg's most provocative and least understood film has stood the test of time and can now be seen as central to his *oeuvre*. [We're repeating it here due to its success in our recent season of the director's work.] The disintegration of the individual self through exposure to outside stimuli (here, TV images) or the ingestion of substances (drugs in *Naked Lunch*) is a recurring theme in his work. The concern is with the way physical changes in the body can alter an individual's mental perception of reality.

Sleazeball cable station owner Max Renn (James





Woods) tunes in to a late-night 'pirate' satellite broadcast showing 'real' acts of torture and violence. Continued exposure to the images loosens his grip on reality, and he drifts imperceptibly into hallucinatory confusion. Is his sado-masochistic relationship with Nicki Brand (Deborah Harry) real, or merely the result of a brain tumour generated by an encoded signal on the Videodrome channel? As media evangelist Brian O'Blivion says, "Your reality is already half-hallucination . . . you have to learn to live with a strange new reality."

Cronenberg's refusal to differentiate between what is real and what is hallucination makes it impossible to anchor one's responses to the extreme images. We therefore share Max's disorientation and are forced, like him, to embrace a brave new world in which vagina-like slots open up in human stomachs, guns and hands meld into a bio-mechanical whole, and flesh and media images are indivisible. An astonishing and uncompromising film, the power of which has increased rather than diminished with the years.

Nigel Floyd

## **The Unbearable Lightness of Being (18)**

**October 1-4**

Director: Philip Kaufman. U.S.A., 1988.  
Starring: Daniel Day-Lewis, Juliette Binoche, Lena Olin.  
Colour. Dolby stereo. 172 mins.

American director Philip Kaufman's ambitious adaptation of Milan Kundera's celebrated Czech novel is a powerful story of love and politics set during the 'Prague Spring' of 1968. The novel's complex structure and heady philosophising have been simplified, but its spirit permeates every frame of Kaufman's magnificent epic. The main protagonist, Tomas (Daniel Day-Lewis), is a younger and more sympathetic character in the film. He is the prominent surgeon and compulsive womaniser who strives for 'lightness' in his life. Like his regular lover, Sabine (Lena Olin), he wishes to

avoid emotional entanglements. But the lives of both characters are changed through their involvement with Tereza (a magnificent performance by Juliette Binoche), who clings to Tomas despite his philandering ways.

This love story is set against the background of life in Prague before and after Soviet tanks rumbled into the city and destroyed that sense of freedom which had come to symbolise 'socialism with a human face'. A large budget allowed Kaufman to combine archive footage with a spectacular re-staging of the invasion, and the seamless matching of the two is astonishing in its effect. Unusually for such a large-scale American production, the film even manages to capture much of the sardonic tone and erotic elements in Kundera's novel.



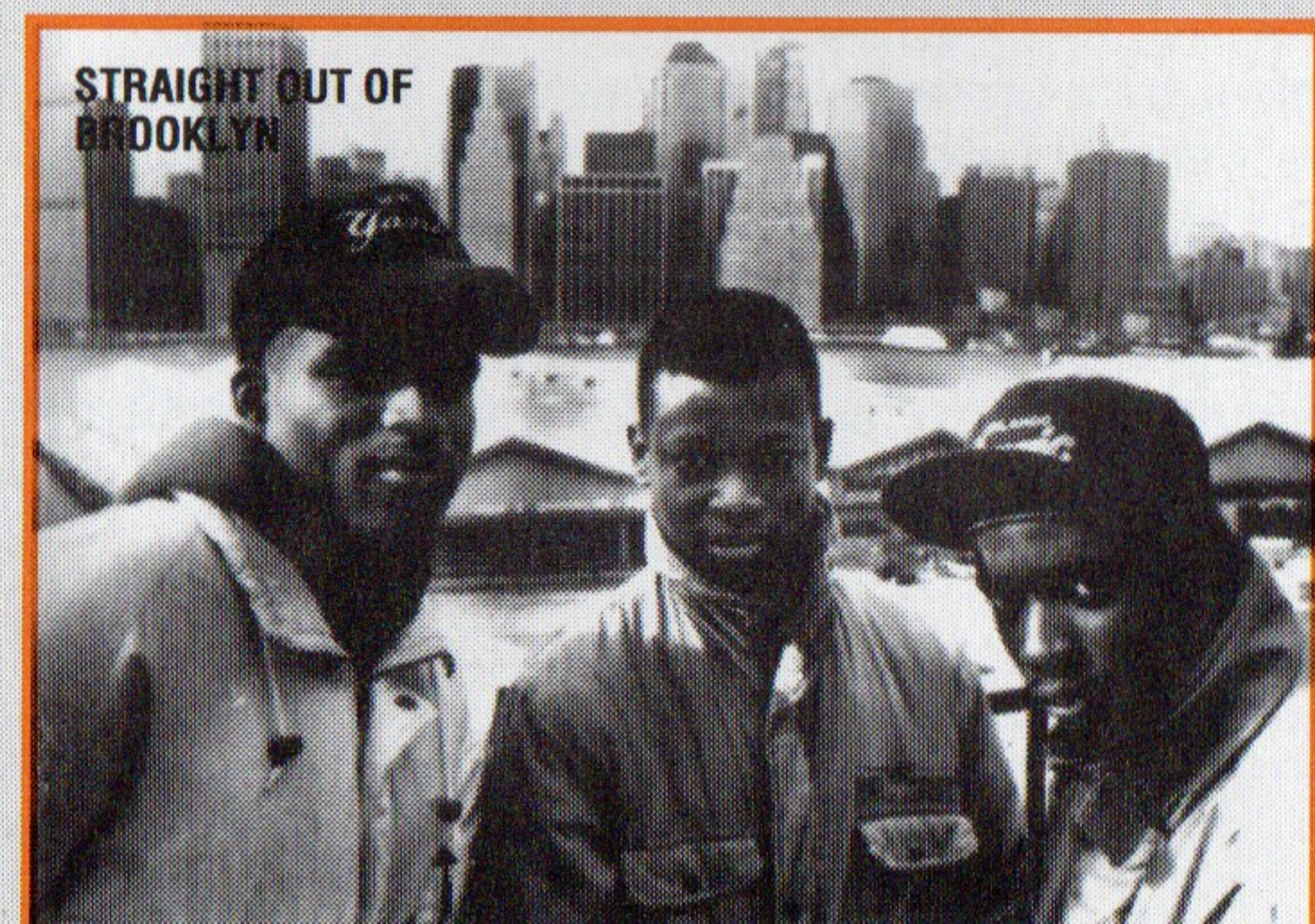
## **Space Movies All-Nighter** **October 9**

See the Film and Television Festival programme for notes.

## **Chameleon Street & Straight Out of Brooklyn**

**October 16**

See the Film and Television Festival programme for notes.



## **Once Upon a Time in America (18)** **October 22-25**

Director: Sergio Leone. U.S.A., 1983.  
Starring: Robert De Niro, James Woods, Elizabeth McGovern.  
Colour. 229 mins.

Sergio Leone's last film is an epic vision of American gangsterism. It is at once a homage to the Hollywood gangster movie and an attempt to demythologise the genre by portraying the characters as brutal and sadistic. 'Noodles' (Robert De Niro) returns to New York thirty-five years after fleeing from the city and shutting himself away from the outside world. His departure was precipitated by his betrayal of his accomplices. He looks back on the rise of the gang, from the Jewish backstreets of their youth through their zenith during Prohibition to their inevitable Götterdämmerung. In particular, he considers his relationship with Max (James Woods), his friend, partner, rival and usurper.

In an early scene, the urchin gang deposit the key to a left-luggage locker in which they store their loot inside a grandfather clock. This is a deliberate joke by Leone, since the key to understanding the film is the theme of time. Using 1968 as a home base, the film shifts backwards and forwards like the human memory, using the past to make sense of the present.

## **Wayne's World (PG)** **October 29-31**

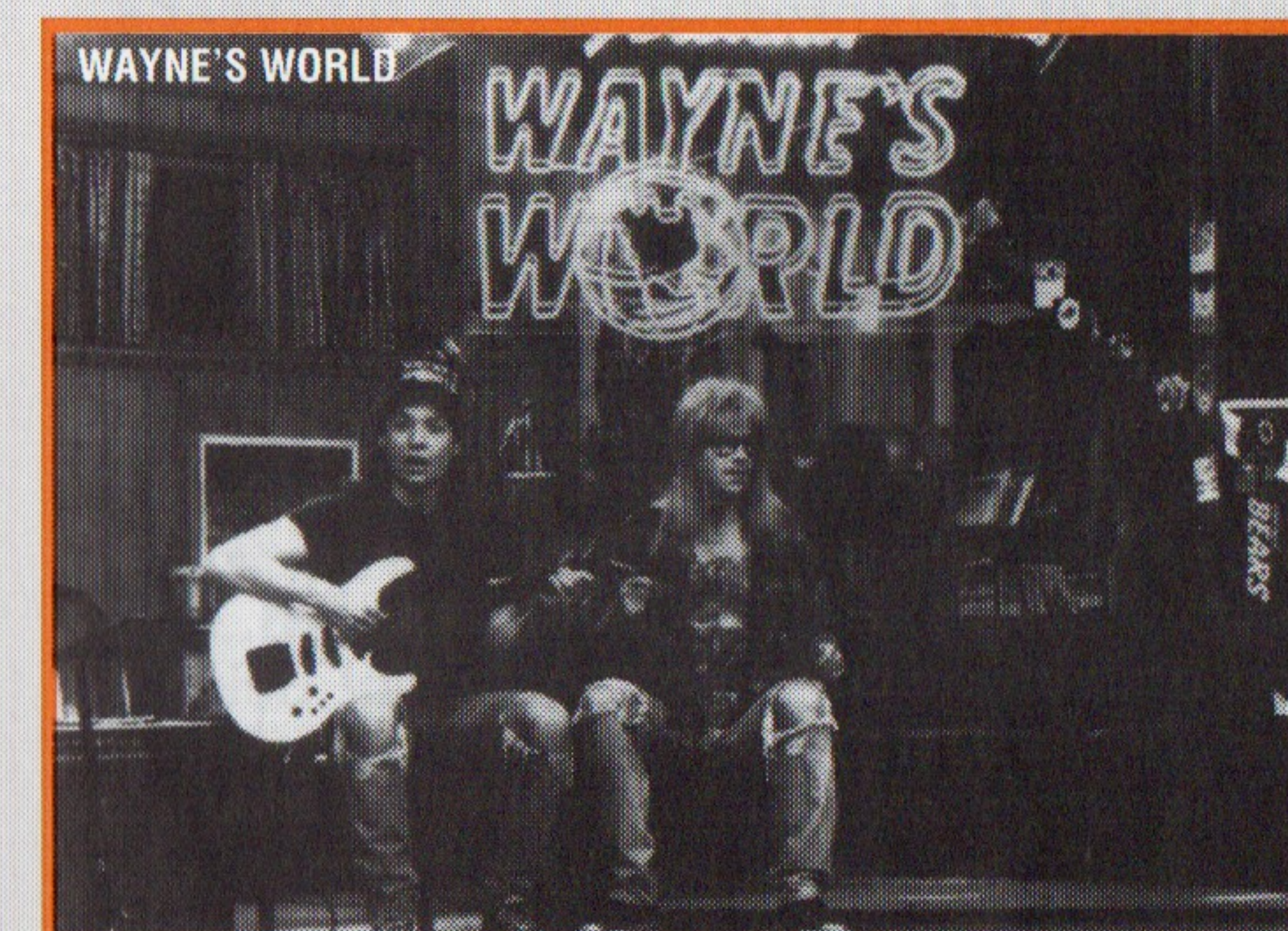
Director: Penelope Spheeris. U.S.A., 1992.  
Starring: Mike Myers, Dana Carvey, Rob Loew.  
Colour. Dolby stereo. 95 mins.

"Teenager Wayne Campbell and his best friend Garth Algar broadcast from Wayne's basement a cable-access show, Wayne's World, featuring their personal thoughts on teenage life, heavy metal and girls . . .

"The teen-talk of the engagingly single-minded Wayne and Garth invites comparison with the

adventures of Bill and Ted, which were similarly developed from stand-up routine into feature-length plot. But the true precedents for *Wayne's World*, which draws on characters created by stars Mike Myers and Dana Carvey for *Saturday Night Live*, are John Landis's *The Blues Brothers* (which emerged from the same source a decade earlier, with a similar format integrating music and mayhem with frame-breaking cine-literate gags) and *UHF*, starring Weird Al Yankovic, which used a trash cable television theme to link its disparate sketches."

Kim Newman/Sight and Sound



## **COMING SOON:**

The restored version of Orson Welles's *Othello* (pictured) . . . Victoria Abril in Vicente Aranda's *Lovers* . . . Alison Anders's *Gas Food Lodging* . . . Celluloid Sinatra.





# 8th BIRMINGHAM INTERNATIONAL FILM AND TELEVISION FESTIVAL

October 8-17

The Triangle is pleased to be hosting a large number of screenings as part of this year's Festival. The programme is not complete at the time of going to press, so please see the Festival brochure for full details. Below we present brief notes on some of the main attractions showing at the Triangle.

It should be noted that special prices will apply to all Film Festival screenings as follows: £3.75 and £2.75 (concessions). See the Festival brochure for details of ticket arrangements and advance bookings.

## *The Blue Eyes of Yonta* (Oct. 9 at 8.30 p.m.)

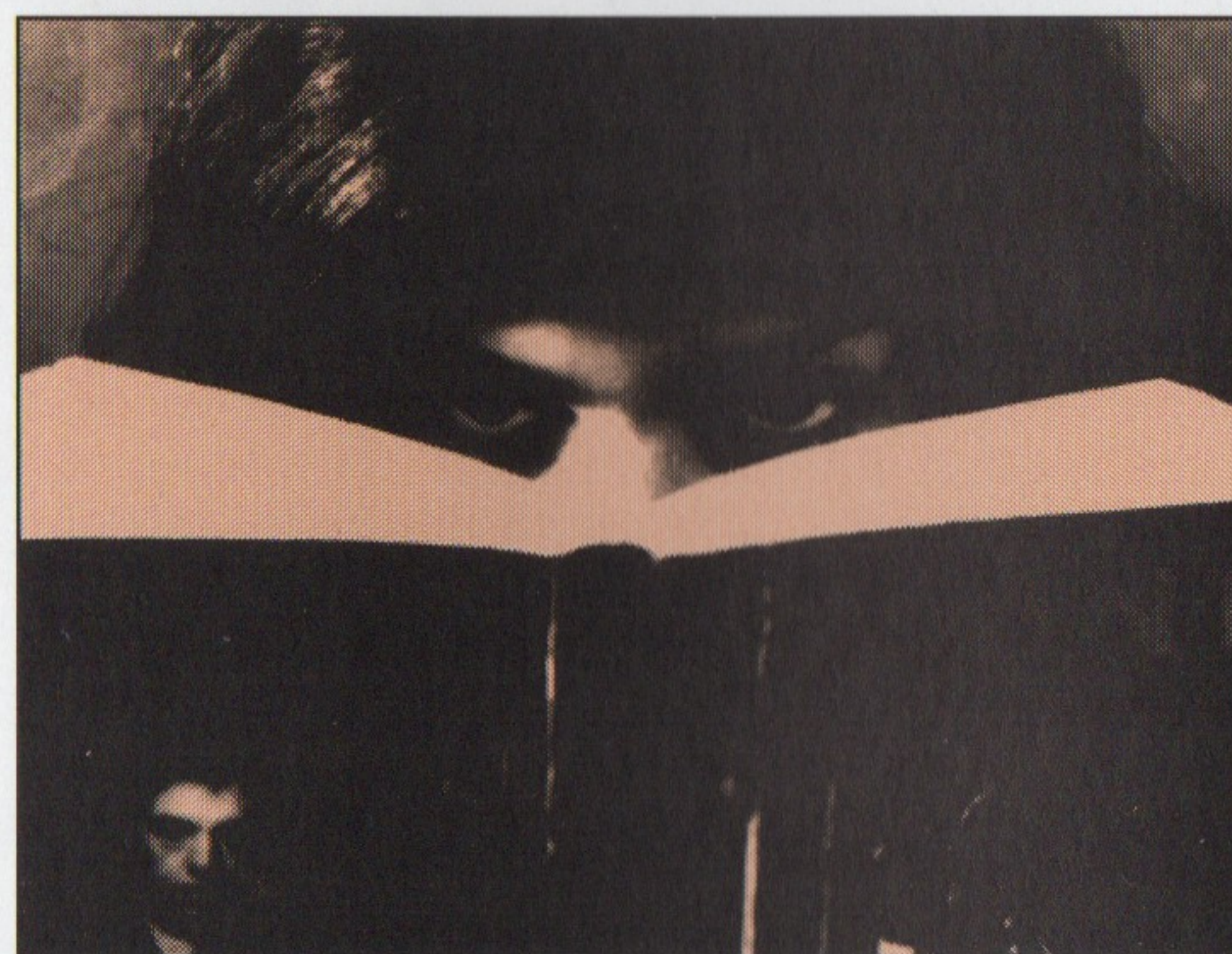
This will be the British premiere of Flora Gomez's beautiful and acclaimed tragi-comedy. In the shifting space of the African city of Bissau—where the fear of dismissal and unemployment is ever-present—we meet Yonta, a young girl who silently loves a friend of her parents, a former hero of his country's struggle for independence. Gomez says of her film: "It's all about a beautiful girl who is in love with a sad man who's unaware of that love, while a rather shy boy dreams of her without her noticing it. In this story there is a fourth character, and one that gradually changes everything, the motion and colour of the film: it is Bissau, the capital of Guinea-Bissau, the city where I have always lived." Highly recommended.

## *Reservoir Dogs*

(Oct 10 at 8.30 p.m.)

One of the discoveries of this year's Cannes Film Festival, *Reservoir Dogs* is an ingenious, stylish, violent and very funny modern-day *film noir* about betrayal among thieves. As *Variety* noted, "*Reservoir Dogs* will put debut writer-director Quentin Tarantino on the map . . . an intense,

blood-in-your-face drama about a botched robbery and its aftermath. Colourfully written in gangster vernacular and well played by a terrific cast [headed by Harvey Keitel and Tim Roth]." It's destined to become a classic, but not with the unduly squeamish.



CRUSH

## *Crush*

(Oct 12 at 8.30 p.m.)

Alison Maclean's unnerving film centres on a teenage girl's developing awareness of sexuality and power but is grounded in a powerfully enigmatic performance by Marcia Gay Harden as Lane, a malevolent American visiting New Zealand. Driving through a desolate volcanic landscape, Lane causes an horrific crash and leaves journalist friend Christine for dead. While Christine languishes in hospital, Lane contacts the writer they were travelling to interview and initiates an affair. Enter the writer's troubled teenage daughter and the stage is set for a disturbing story of love, hatred and guilt. Maclean has largely succeeded in her stated aim of wanting the film "to have the resonance and pull of a deep, dark dream, with unsettling shifts of tone from tension and foreboding to ironic humour".

## *This Boy's Story*

(Oct 15 at 6.00 p.m.)

In what has proved to be a poor year for British cinema, this delightful short feature by two ex-National Film School students comes as a very welcome sign of creative life and fully deserves its showcase screening in the Festival. One should perhaps resist the temptation to overpraise or patronise it, but I found *This Boy's Story* more memorable and accomplished than most of our recent big features. It starts with the advantage of a simple yet resonant story, which is contained within a witty framing structure. A young man who is about to face the responsibilities of adulthood recalls an incident from his childhood when he and his younger brother embarked on a journey to Liverpool in the hope of seeing their hero, George Best, "the greatest footballer in the world".

The success of the film has to do with the skilful way in which it combines elements of reality (the grim environment, the dangers involved in the boys' journey) and fantasy (the dream of seeing one's idol on a big occasion). Excellent performances, evocative photography and especially a rare ability to capture it's young protagonists' subjective view of the world make this a gem of a movie. There is one magical scene, when the boys awake at dawn on Liverpool's dockside as a ship glides past in the background, which Spielberg himself might envy.

The accompanying short, *Roadtrip*, provides very different pleasures. Spectacularly well shot in wide-screen, it's a road movie filled with bizarre characters and off-the-wall cinematic gags.—Peter Walsh.

## *Simple Men*

(Oct 15 at 8.30 p.m.)

From festival favourite Hal Hartley (*Trust*, *The Unbelievable Truth*) comes another iconoclastic journey into the American Dream. *Simple Men* is the story of two brothers, one an idealistic college student and the other a petty criminal who has just been double-crossed by his girlfriend. The brothers set off in search of their father, a former all-American baseball player turned radical political activist who's on the run. Along the way the brothers meet an incredible array of characters: cigarette-smoking nuns, young nymphets, cops suffering with existential angst, and two very strong women. As someone philosophises, "There's no such thing as

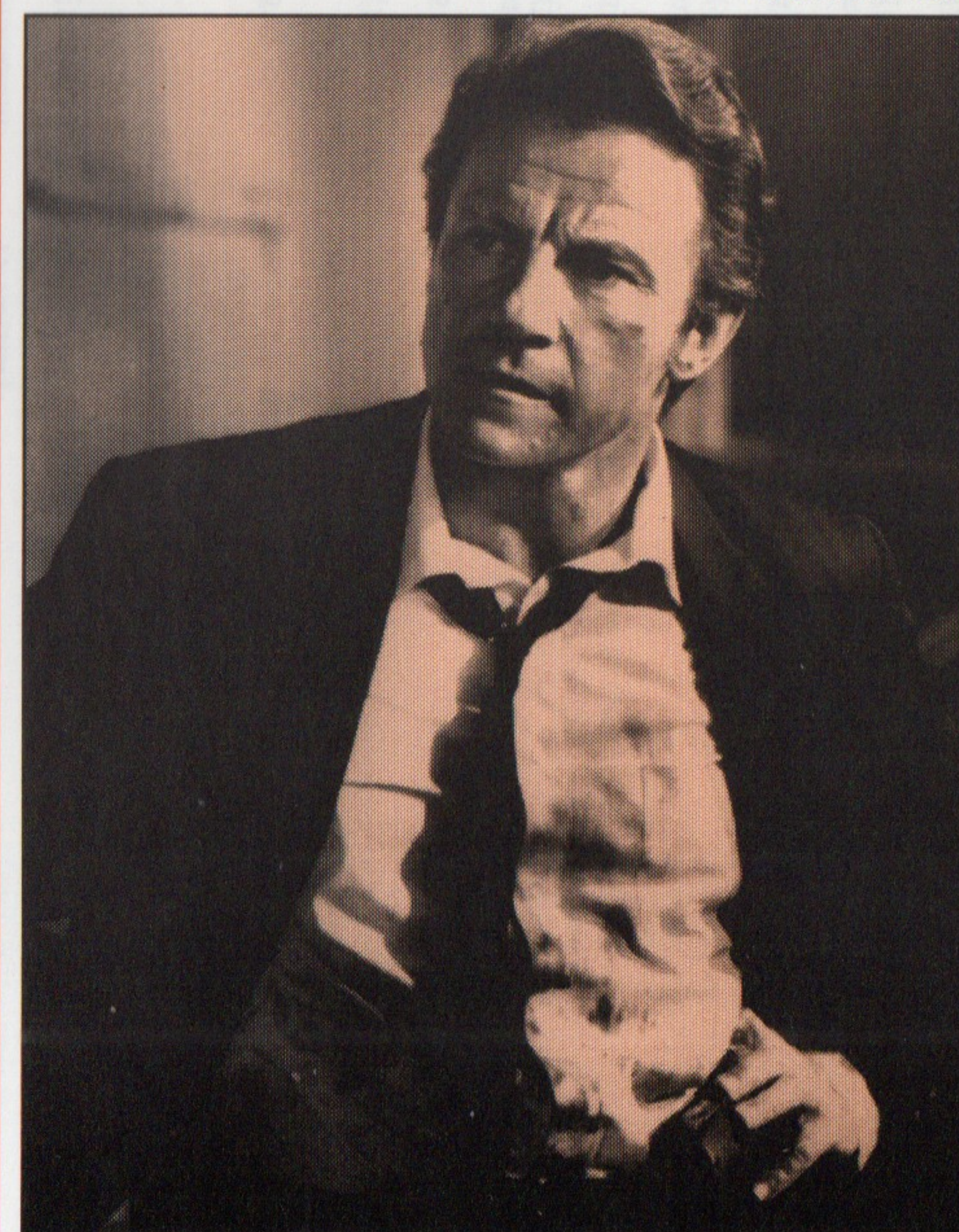
adventure and romance. There's only trouble and desire." Says Hartley, "The film analyses the conventions of romance and courtship, confronting the preconceptions men have about women and themselves." Critic Nick Roddick found it "very, very good and very, very funny."

## *Sweet Emma, Dear Böbe*

(Oct 16 at 8.30 p.m.)

After the international shenanigans of *Meeting Venus*, Hungarian director István Szabó has returned to Budapest for his theme. But the experiences displayed in *Sweet Emma, Dear Böbe* are part of a common problem: how to cope when your position of relative prestige and influence is taken away, suddenly and cruelly. Emma and Böbe are country girls who have made good in Budapest by becoming teachers of the Russian language. After the Velvet Revolution, however, their services become unpopular overnight. They begin to learn and teach English, but in the post-Communist economy their salaries won't cover the rent. Böbe supplements her earnings through prostitution, while Emma cleans houses for the well-off. Angry, bleak and convincing in its attention to detail, Szabó's film records the women's struggle for survival, self-respect and hard currency.

RESEVOIR DOGS





# TRIANGLE CINEMA

## SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 1992

### 1 Tuesday

NIGHT ON EARTH (15) 3.00 & 8.45 p.m.  
BIG WEDNESDAY (PG) 6.15 p.m.

### 2 Wednesday

NIGHT ON EARTH (15) 3.00 & 8.45 p.m.  
BIG WEDNESDAY (PG) 6.15 p.m.

### 3 Thursday

NIGHT ON EARTH (15) 3.00 & 8.45 p.m.  
BIG WEDNESDAY (PG) 6.15 p.m.

### 4 Friday

BIG WEDNESDAY (PG) 3.00 & 11.15 p.m.  
THE BUTCHER'S WIFE (12) 6.30 p.m.  
WITHOUT YOU I'M NOTHING (18) 8.45 p.m.

### 5 Saturday

BIG WEDNESDAY (PG) 3.00 & 11.15 p.m.  
THE BUTCHER'S WIFE (12) 6.30 p.m.  
WITHOUT YOU I'M NOTHING (18) 8.45 p.m.

### 6 Sunday

BIG WEDNESDAY (PG) 3.00 p.m.  
THE BUTCHER'S WIFE (12) 6.30 p.m.  
WITHOUT YOU I'M NOTHING (18) 8.45 p.m.

### 7 Monday

Buñuel: L'AGE D'OR (15) & UN CHIEN  
ANDALOU (18) 3.00 & 7.00 p.m.  
WITHOUT YOU I'M NOTHING (18) 5.00 & 8.45 p.m.

### 8 Tuesday

Buñuel: L'AGE D'OR (15) & UN CHIEN  
ANDALOU (18) 3.00 & 7.00 p.m.  
WITHOUT YOU I'M NOTHING (18) 5.00 & 8.45 p.m.

### 9 Wednesday

Buñuel: L'AGE D'OR (15) & UN CHIEN  
ANDALOU (18) 3.00 & 7.00 p.m.  
WITHOUT YOU I'M NOTHING (18) 5.00 & 8.45 p.m.

### 10 Thursday

ANGEL HEART (18) 3.00 p.m.  
Buñuel: THAT OBSCURE OBJECT OF DESIRE  
(18) 6.30 p.m.  
WITHOUT YOU I'M NOTHING (18) 8.45 p.m.

### 11 Friday

ANGEL HEART (18) 2.30 & 11.15 p.m.  
Buñuel: BELLE DE JOUR (18) 5.00 & 9.00 p.m.  
Buñuel: THAT OBSCURE OBJECT OF DESIRE  
(18) 7.00 p.m.

### 12 Saturday

ANGEL HEART (18) 2.30 & 11.15 p.m.  
Buñuel: BELLE DE JOUR (18) 5.00 & 9.00 p.m.  
Buñuel: THAT OBSCURE OBJECT OF DESIRE  
(18) 7.00 p.m.

### 13 Sunday

ANGEL HEART (18) 2.30 p.m.  
Buñuel: BELLE DE JOUR (18) 5.00 & 9.00 p.m.  
Buñuel: THAT OBSCURE OBJECT OF DESIRE  
(18) 7.00 p.m.

### 14 Monday

Buñuel: BELLE DE JOUR (18) 3.00, 5.00 & 9.00 p.m.  
Buñuel: THE MILKY WAY (PG) 7.00 p.m.

### 15 Tuesday

Buñuel: BELLE DE JOUR (18) 3.00, 5.00 & 9.00 p.m.  
Buñuel: THE MILKY WAY (PG) 7.00 p.m.

### 16 Wednesday

Buñuel: BELLE DE JOUR (18) 3.00, 5.00 & 9.00 p.m.  
Buñuel: THE PHANTOM OF LIBERTY (18)  
7.00 p.m.

### 17 Thursday

BASIC INSTINCT (18) 2.30 p.m.  
BOY MEETS GIRL (15) 5.00 & 9.00 p.m.  
Buñuel: THE PHANTOM OF LIBERTY (18)  
7.00 p.m.

### 18 Friday

BASIC INSTINCT (18) 3.00 & 11.15 p.m.  
LES AMANTS DU PONT-NEUF (18) 6.15 & 8.45 p.m.

### 19 Saturday

BASIC INSTINCT (18) 3.00 & 11.15 p.m.  
LES AMANTS DU PONT-NEUF (18) 6.15 & 8.45 p.m.

### 20 Sunday

BASIC INSTINCT (18) 3.00 p.m.  
LES AMANTS DU PONT-NEUF (18) 6.15 & 8.45 p.m.

### 21 Monday

LES AMANTS DU PONT-NEUF (18) 3.00, 6.15 & 8.45 p.m.

### 22 Tuesday

LES AMANTS DU PONT-NEUF (18) 3.00, 6.15 & 8.45 p.m.

### 23 Wednesday

LES AMANTS DU PONT-NEUF (18) 3.00 & 8.45 p.m.

THE NIGHT IS YOUNG (MAUVAIS SANG) (15)  
6.15 p.m.

### 24 Thursday

VIDEODROME (18) 3.00 p.m.  
THE NIGHT IS YOUNG (MAUVAIS SANG) (15)  
6.15 p.m.  
LES AMANTS DU PONT-NEUF (18) 8.45 p.m.

### 25 Friday

VIDEODROME (18) 3.00 & 11.15 p.m.  
LES AMANTS DU PONT-NEUF (18) 6.15 & 8.45 p.m.

### 26 Saturday

VIDEODROME (18) 3.00 & 11.15 p.m.  
Buñuel: TRISTANA (15) 6.15 p.m.  
LES AMANTS DU PONT-NEUF (18) 8.45 p.m.

### 27 Sunday

VIDEODROME (18) 3.00 p.m.  
Buñuel: TRISTANA (15) 6.15 p.m.  
LES AMANTS DU PONT-NEUF (18) 8.45 p.m.

### 28 Monday

Buñuel: THE DIARY OF A CHAMBERMAID  
(15) 2.30 & 6.45 p.m.  
LES AMANTS DU PONT-NEUF (18) 4.30 & 8.45 p.m.

### 29 Tuesday

Buñuel: THE DIARY OF A CHAMBERMAID  
(15) 2.30 & 6.45 p.m.  
LES AMANTS DU PONT-NEUF (18) 4.30 & 8.45 p.m.

### 30 Wednesday

Buñuel: THE DIARY OF A CHAMBERMAID  
(15) 2.30 & 6.45 p.m.  
LES AMANTS DU PONT-NEUF (18) 4.30 & 8.45 p.m.

## OCTOBER

### 1 Thursday

THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF BEING  
(18) 2.30 p.m.  
EL NORTE (15) 6.15 p.m.  
LES AMANTS DU PONT-NEUF (18) 8.45 p.m.

### 2 Friday

THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF BEING  
(18) 3.00 & 11.15 p.m.  
SECRET FRIENDS (15) 6.30 p.m.  
LES AMANTS DU PONT-NEUF (18) 8.45 p.m.

### 3 Saturday

THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF BEING  
(18) 3.00 & 11.15 p.m.  
SECRET FRIENDS (15) 6.30 p.m.  
LES AMANTS DU PONT-NEUF (18) 8.45 p.m.

### 4 Sunday

THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF BEING  
(18) 3.00 p.m.  
SECRET FRIENDS (15) 6.30 p.m.  
LES AMANTS DU PONT-NEUF (18) 8.45 p.m.

### 5 Monday

LES AMANTS DU PONT-NEUF (18) 3.00 & 8.45 p.m.  
SECRET FRIENDS (15) 6.30 p.m.

### 6 Tuesday

LES AMANTS DU PONT-NEUF (18) 3.00 & 8.45 p.m.  
SECRET FRIENDS (15) 6.30 p.m.

### 7 Wednesday

LES AMANTS DU PONT-NEUF (18) 3.00 & 8.45 p.m.  
SECRET FRIENDS (15) 6.30 p.m.

### 8 Thursday

LES AMANTS DU PONT-NEUF (18) 3.00 & 8.45 p.m.  
SECRET FRIENDS (15) 6.30 p.m.

### 9 Friday

**B'ham Film & TV Festival (\*)**  
THE HOURS AND THE TIMES 6.00 p.m.  
THE BLUE EYES OF YONTA 8.30 p.m.  
Space Movies All-Nighter from 11.15 p.m.

### 10 Saturday

SCRUBBERS (18) 3.00 p.m.  
HOOR ON FIRE 6.00 p.m.  
RESERVOIR DOGS (18) 8.30 p.m.

### 11 Sunday

A BRIGHTER SUMMER DAY 2.30 p.m.  
DEVIL'S DREAM 6.00 p.m.  
THE RUNNER 8.30 p.m.

### 12 Monday

BFI New Directors' Shorts 3.00 p.m.  
THE PARTY; NATURE MORTE & EERIE  
6.00 p.m.  
CRUSH & REVOLVER 8.30 p.m.

### 13 Tuesday

SPOTSWOOD (Unconfirmed) 3.00 p.m.  
JUKTI TAKKO AR GAPPO 6.00 p.m.  
SWOON & NOW THAT IT'S MORNING  
8.30 p.m.

### 14 Wednesday

DAUGHTERS OF THE DUST 3.00 p.m.  
THE CYCLIST 6.00 p.m.  
PRAGUE & THE BIRTHDAY 8.30 p.m.

### 15 Thursday

THE LAND 3.00 p.m.  
THIS BOY'S STORY & ROADTRIP 6.00 p.m.  
SIMPLE MEN 8.30 p.m.

### 16 Friday

ANGEL OF FIRE 3.00 p.m.  
THE SHIP ANGELICA 6.00 p.m.  
SWEET EMMA, DEAR BÖBE 8.30 p.m.  
CHAMELEON STREET, STRAIGHT OUT OF  
BROOKLYN & MONEY TALKS 11.15 p.m.

### 17 Saturday

UTZ 3.00 p.m.  
YOUR BEATING HEART 6.00 p.m.  
IMMACULATE CONCEPTION (15) 8.30 p.m.

### Film & TV Festival Ends

### 18 Sunday

Buñuel: THE DISCREET CHARM OF THE  
BOURGEOISIE (15) 2.00 & 6.30 p.m.  
IMMACULATE CONCEPTION (15) 4.15 & 8.45 p.m.

### 19 Monday

Buñuel: THE DISCREET CHARM OF THE

BOURGEOISIE (15) 2.00 & 6.30 p.m.  
IMMACULATE CONCEPTION (15) 4.15 & 8.45 p.m.

### 20 Tuesday

Buñuel: THE DISCREET CHARM OF THE  
BOURGEOISIE (15) 2.00 & 6.30 p.m.  
IMMACULATE CONCEPTION (15) 4.15 & 8.45 p.m.

### 21 Wednesday

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION (15) 3.00 & 8.45 p.m.  
JUICE (15) 6.45 p.m.

### 22 Thursday

ONCE UPON A TIME IN AMERICA (18)  
2.00 p.m.  
JUICE (15) 6.45 p.m.  
IMMACULATE CONCEPTION (15) 8.45 p.m.

### 23 Friday

ONCE UPON A TIME IN AMERICA (18) 3.00 & 11.15 p.m.  
JUICE (15) 7.00 p.m.  
STRAIGHT OUT OF BROOKLYN (15) 9.00 p.m.

### 24 Saturday

ONCE UPON A TIME IN AMERICA (18) 3.00 & 11.15 p.m.  
JUICE (15) 7.00 p.m.  
STRAIGHT OUT OF BROOKLYN (15) 9.00 p.m.

### 25 Sunday

ONCE UPON A TIME IN AMERICA (18)  
3.00 p.m.  
JUICE (15) 7.00 p.m.  
STRAIGHT OUT OF BROOKLYN (15) 9.00 p.m.

### 26 Monday

WATERLAND (15) 3.00 & 7.00 p.m.  
STRAIGHT OUT OF BROOKLYN (15) 5.00 & 9.00 p.m.

### 27 Tuesday

WATERLAND (15) 3.00 & 7.00 p.m.  
STRAIGHT OUT OF BROOKLYN (15) 5.00 & 9.00 p.m.

### 28 Wednesday

WATERLAND (15) 3.00 & 7.00 p.m.  
STRAIGHT OUT OF BROOKLYN (15) 5.00 & 9.00 p.m.

### 29 Thursday

WAYNE'S WORLD (PG) 3.00 p.m.  
STRAIGHT OUT OF BROOKLYN (15) 5.00 & 9.00 p.m.  
WATERLAND (15) 7.00 p.m.

### 30 Friday

WAYNE'S WORLD (PG) 3.00 & 11.15 p.m.  
WATERLAND (15) 5.00 & 9.00 p.m.  
SWOON (18) 7.00 p.m.

### 31 Saturday

WAYNE'S WORLD (PG) 3.00 & 11.15 p.m.  
WATERLAND (15) 5.00 & 9.00 p.m.  
SWOON (18) 7.00 p.m.

(\*) Please see the Film & TV Festival  
booklet for full programme details.